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A G I N C O U R T.

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VOL. III.

AGINCOURT.

A ROMANCE.

BY G. P. R. JAMES, Esq.,

AUTHOR OF

"DARNLEY," "DE L'ORME," "ARABELLA STUART,"
"ROSE D'ALBRET," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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AGINCOURT.

CHAPTER I.

THE BETRAYER.

THE writer must retread his steps for a while, to show the events which had taken place in the city of Ghent, since Ned Dyram and Sir Simeon of Roydon were last seen upon the stage. Whether the reader may think fit to do so or not, must depend upon himself. All that the author can promise is, that he will be brief, and merely sketch the conduct of the personages left behind till he brings them up with the rest.

The arrival of Sir Simeon of Roydon in Ghent spread the same terror through the heart of poor Ella Brune that the appearance

of a hawk produces in one of the feathered songsters of the bush or clouds. Had Richard of Woodville been there, she would have felt no apprehension; for to him she had accustomed herself to look for protection and support, with that relying confidence, that trust in his power, his wisdom, and his goodness, which perhaps ought never to be placed in man, and which is never so placed, but by a heart where love is present. Had she been even in London, her terror would have been less; for even in those days—although they were dark and barbarous, although tumult and riot, civil strife and contention, injustice and wrong would, as we all know, take place in every different country—the peculiar character of the English people, the homely sense of justice and of right, which has been their chief characteristic in all ages, was sufficiently strong to render this island comparatively a land of security. Though there might be persons to oppress and injure, yet there were generally found some kind hearts and generous spirits to support and protect; and in short, there were more defences for those

who needed defence, than in any state in Europe.

Very different, however, was the case in Ghent, especially for a stranger, and Ella Brune well knew that it was so. She was aware that deeds could be done there boldly and openly, which in England would require cunning concealment and artful device, even for a chance of success; and the consequence was, that she kept herself immured within the walls of her cousin's dwelling, never venturing forth, even to breathe the air, but at night, and striving to make her companionship during the day prove as pleasant as possible to the worthy dame of Nicholas Brune. To her and to him she communicated the cause of her apprehensions; and it is but justice to the good folks to say, that they entered warmly into her feelings, and did all that they could to mitigate her alarm and give her encouragement. But Ella Brune, in answer to all assurances of safety, constantly replied, that she should never feel secure, till Richard of Woodville had returned; and, as it was already beyond the period at which he

had promised to be back, she looked for his appearance every day.

From such subjects sprang many a discussion between her and her good cousin, as to her future conduct. "Why you know, my pretty Ella," he would say, "you could not go wandering after this gay young gentleman, over all the world; mischief would come of it, be you sure. Men are not to be trusted, nor pretty maidens either. We have all our weak moments; and if no harm happen to you, your fair fame would suffer. Men would call you his leman."

"Ay that is what I fear," answered Ella Brune, "and that only; for though most men are not to be trusted, he is. But at all events," she continued, willing gently to remove all objections to the plan she was determined to pursue, "he might carry me safely with him to Burgundy, or to Liege, as he brought me here."

Nicholas Brune shook his head; and Ella said no more at that time; but gradually she put forward the notion of obviating all difficulties and objections, by assuming some disguise; and on that her good cousin pondered,

thinking it a more feasible plan than any other, yet seeing many difficulties.

“As what could you go?” he said. “If at all, it must be in male guise; and though you would make a pretty boy enough, I doubt me they would find you out, fair Ella.”

“Why not as a novice of the Black Friars?” demanded Madam Brune, who entered into the maiden’s schemes more warmly and enthusiastically than her prudent husband; “then she would have robes longer than her own, to cover her little hands and feet, and a hood to shade her head. There is no punishment either, for taking the gown of a novice.”

“Then, as this man Dyram must be in the secret,” added Ella Brune, “he could give me help and protection in case of need.”

“Ah, ha! are you there?” cried Nicholas laughing. But Ella shook her head, no way abashed, replying, “you are mistaken, cousin of mine; but perhaps you have so much respect for these holy men, the monks, that you would object to a profane gir, like me, taking their garb upon her?”

“Out upon them, the lazy drones,” cried Nicholas Brune; “you may make what sport of them you like for that. I would put them all to hard labour on the dykes, if I had my will;” and he burst forth into a long vituperation of all the monastic orders, in terms somewhat too gross for modern ears, not even sparing the Holy Roman Catholic Church; but ending with another wise shake of the head, and an expression of his firm belief, that the scheme would not do.

Nevertheless, Ella Brune and his good dame were now perfectly agreed upon the subject, and worked together zealously, preparing all that was needful for Ella’s disguise, while Ned Dyram brought them daily information of the proceedings of Sir Simeon of Roydon, and made them smile to hear how he had deceived the knight into the belief that Ella was far away from Ghent.

“But if he should discover the truth,” said Ella Brune, really anxious that no one should suffer on her account, “may he not revenge himself on you, if you give him the opportunity

by going everyday and working in gold and silver under his eyes? I beseech you, Master Dyam, run no risk on my account; I would rather endure insult or injury myself, than that you should incur danger."

Ned Dyam's heart beat quick, though Ella said no more to him than she would have said to any one in the same circumstances; but he shook his head with a triumphant air, replying, "He dare not wag his finger against me."

He added no more, but turned to the subject of Ella's disguise, having before this been made acquainted with her project, and being, moreover, eager to second it; for the prospect of having to leave her behind in Ghent, if his young master should be called upon some more distant expedition, had often crossed his mind, producing very unpleasant sensations. Day after day, however, he visited Simeon of Roydon, and generally found him alone. Plenty of work was provided for him; and the payment was prompt and large. Now it was an ornamented bridle that he had to produce, encrusted all over with fanciful work of silver—now a

testière or a poitral arabesqued with lines of gold. Sometimes he compounded perfumes or essences, sometimes he illuminated a book of canticles which the knight intended to present to the monastery.

One morning, however, going somewhat earlier than was his wont, he met the monk, brother Paul, coming down the stairs from the knight's apartments. The cenobite gave him a grim smile, but merely added his benedicite and passed on. Ned Dyram paused and mused before he entered. More than once he had asked himself, what it was that detained Sir Simeon of Roydon so long in Ghent. The Court was absent—there was little to see, and less to gain; and the visit of father Paul gave him fresh matter for reflection. But Ned Dyram was one, who, judging by slight indications, always prepared himself against probable results; and he now divined that the discovery of the truth in regard to Ella, might not be far off.

He found no change in Simeon of Roydon when he entered, and the morning passed away

as usual; but on the following day, the knight received him with a smile so mixed in its expression, that Dyram felt the hilt of his anelace, and returned him his look with one as doubtful.

“Shut the door, Master Dyram,” said Sir Simeon of Roydon.

The man obeyed without the least hesitation; and the knight proceeded, “Think you, fellow, that it is wise and worthy to cheat and to deceive?”

“On proper occasions, and with proper men,” replied Ned Dyram calmly.

“Ah, you do?” cried the knight with his brow bent, “Then let me tell you, that you will deceive me no more.”

“That depends upon circumstances and opportunity,” answered Ned Dyram with the same imperturbable effrontery as before; “I dare say you will not give me the means, if you can help it.”

“What, if I take from you the opportunity of cheating any one again?” exclaimed Sir Simeon of Roydon. “What if, as you well

deserve, I call up my men, and bid them dispose of you as they know how?"

"You will not do that," replied Dyram, without a shade of emotion.

"Why should I not?" demanded the knight fiercely. "What should stop me?—Out of these walls no secrets are likely to pass—Why should I not, I say?"

"Because," said Dyram in a cool conversation tone, "there is a certain bridge in this city, over the river Lys, where you may have seen, as you pass along, a foolish figure cast in bronze, of two men, one going to cut off the other's head apparently. They represent a son who offered to execute his father, when, as old legends say—but I do not believe them—the sword flew to splinters in the parricide's hand. However, that has not much to do with the matter, as I see you perceive; but the fact is, that bridge is called the Bridge of the Decapitation—not, as many men fancy, on account of those two statues, but because it is there the citizens of this good town, have a pious custom of putting to death knights and nobles, who have

had the misfortune to become murderers. Now you must not suppose me so slow-witted a man as to come to visit Sir Simeon of Roydon under such peculiar circumstances, without letting those persons know where I am, who may enquire after me if I do not reappear. I am always ready for such cases, noble knight, and to say truth, care little when I go out of the world, so that I have a companion by the way ; and that, in this instance at least, I have secured. 'Tis therefore, I say, you will abandon such vain thoughts."

Sir Simeon of Roydon gazed at him for a moment with the expression of a fiend ; but suddenly his countenance changed, and he fell into deep thought.

What strifes there are in that eternal battlefield, the human heart ! What strifes have there not been therein, since the first fell passion entered into man's breast with the words of the serpent tempter—ay, with the words of the tempter ; for man had fallen before he ate ! But perhaps there is none more frequent, than the struggle between passion and policy in

the bosom of the vehement and wily, — none more terrible either ; for whichever gains the ascendancy, ruins the country round.

There was something in Dyram's demeanour that suited well with the character of him to whom he spoke. Opposed to him, it first excited wrath ; but yet a voice whispered that such a man might be made most useful to his purposes, if he could but be won ; and as the knight's anger abated, the question became, how could he be gained. In regard to Ella Brune, Roydon was aware of much that had taken place, but not of all ; otherwise his course would have been soon decided. By this time he had learned that Ella had journeyed from England in the train of Richard of Woodville ; he knew that Dyram had stayed behind — not dismissed by his master as the man had insinuated, but left in charge of his baggage ; and Simeon of Roydon suspected, judging of others by himself, that he had been left in charge of Ella, also, by her paramour. But of Dyram's love for her he had no hint, though there might have arisen in his mind a vague

surmise that such attachment did exist, from the fact which brother Paul had discovered and communicated, that Dyram visited her once at least each day.

That surmise, however, was enough to guide him some way, and after pausing and pondering, till silence became unpleasant, he said, "Perhaps, my good friend, you may be mistaken in what you fancy. No fears of the results you speak of, would stay me, were I so minded. Those who have good friends dread no foes."

"That is what I say, sir," replied Ned Dyram, in the same tone; "I have no apprehensions, because I know there are those who will take care of me, or avenge me."

"You need have none," answered Sir Simeon of Roydon; "but not for that cause. There are other regards that would restrain me. You have deceived me, it is true; but you can deceive me no more; and now that I know your motives and your conduct, I think that our ends may not be quite so different as you imagine, and as I too imagined at first."

“Indeed!” said Ned Dyrham, with a sarcastic smile. “I know not what your ends are, or what you think you know. Knowledge is a strange thing, noble knight, and those who fancy they know much, often know little.”

“True, learned master,” answered Simeon of Roydon; “but you shall hear what I know—I wish not to conceal it.—Your young lord brought this fair girl to Ghent; then, being called to serve the Duke of Burgundy, left his sweet leman—” he paused upon the word, and saw his companion’s visage glow; but Dyrham said nothing, and the knight went on; “—left his sweet leman, with his other baggage under your careful guard. She lives now in the house of one Nicholas Brune; and you see her daily. You love her; and fancying that I seek her par amours would fain hide from me where she is. That you see is vain; and I will show you too, that what you suppose of me is false. I care not for the girl; though perchance I may have thought, in former days, to trifle with her for an hour.—But I will tell you more,

Dyram: I love not your lord, and I believe that you have no great kindness for him either. —Is it not so?"

"All wrong together, puissant knight," replied Ned Dyram, with a laugh. "She is no leman of Richard of Woodville—Sir Richard, by the mass! for I have heard to-day he has been made a knight.—Nay, more; he cares no farther for her, than as a boy who has saved a bird from hawk or raven, loves to nourish and to fondle it."

"That may be," answered Sir Simeon, who had now regained all his coolness; "you know more than myself of his doings; but of one thing we are both certain, she loves him; and it would need but his humour to make her his. Of that I have had proof enough before I crossed the sea."

Ned Dyram winced; but he replied boldly, "Because she looked coldly upon you."

"Nay, not so," said the knight; "but on account of signs and tokens not to be mistaken. However, if as you think he loves her not, my scheme falls to the ground."

“And what was that, if I may dare to ask?” demanded Ned Dyrain.

“I heed not who knows it,” replied Roydon at once. “I seek revenge, and thought to accomplish it by taking this girl from him. As to what is to follow, I care not. I never seek to see her more; would wed her to a hind or any one. But if you judge rightly, and he loves her not, I am frustrated in this, and must seek other means.”

There was a pause of several minutes; and both thought, or seemed to think, deeply. With Dyrain it was really so; though the more shrewd and wise of the two, he had suffered the words of Roydon to fall upon the dangerous weaknesses of his bosom, like a spark into some inflammable mass; and doubt, suspicion, jealousy, were all in a blaze within. Yet he had sufficient power over himself to hide his feelings skilfully, and sought, neither admitting nor denying ought farther, to lead on the knight to speak of his purposes more plainly. But Simeon of Roydon saw there was a struggle, and that was sufficient for his purpose without

discovering clearly what it was. He did speak more plainly then, and by many an artful suggestion, and many a promise, sought to lure Dyram on to aid in separating Ella Brune from him who could protect her; concealing carefully, that it was on her, his thirst of revenge longed to sate itself, though Richard of Woodville was not forgotten either; and before they parted, he thought that he had nearly won him to his wishes. The man did, indeed, hesitate; but the sparks of better feeling, which I have before said he possessed, burned up ere their conversation ended; and a doubt which, even in the midst of passion will rise up in the minds of the cunning and deceitful, that there may ever be a knavish purpose in others, made him desire to see his way more clearly.

All that the knight could gain was a promise that he would consider of his hints; and Dyram left him, with the resolution to draw from Ella Brune, by any means, a knowledge of her true feelings towards his master, and to watch every movement of Simeon of Roydon with a care that should let not the veriest trifle escape.

In the first object, he was frustrated as before ; for the cold despair of Ella's love—its utter unselfishness—its high and lofty nature, was a veil to her heart which the eyes of one so full of human passion as himself could by no art penetrate. But, in his second, he was more successful ; with the cunning of a serpent, with the perseverance of a ferret, he examined, he watched, he pursued his purpose. He had already wound himself into the confidence of several of the knight's servants ; and he now took every means to gain some hold upon them, which was not indeed difficult, from the character of the men whom Roydon had chosen. Neither did he altogether cease his visits to their master, but, for many days, kept him negotiating as to the price of his services ; and, although he could not exactly divine the end that the other proposed to himself, he learned enough to show him, that Roydon was sincere when he assured him, that no love for Ella influenced him in seeking to remove her from the protection of Richard of Woodville. He then admitted that he

loved her himself, in order to see what the knight would propose; and was not a little surprised to find how eagerly Roydon grasped at the fact, as a means to his own ends.

“Then she may be yours at a word,” exclaimed Roydon, grasping his hand as if he had been an equal; “but, aid me boldly and skilfully in what I seek, and she shall be placed entirely in your hands—at your mercy—to do with her as you will. Then, if you use not your advantage like a wise and resolute man, it is your own fault.”

Dyram mused: the prospect tempted him: the strong passions of his nature rose up, and urged him on: he could not resist them; but still, cunning and cautious, he resolved to make his own position sure, and he replied, “I must first know your motive, noble knight. Men are not so eager without some object.—What is it?”

“Revenge!” replied Sir Simeon of Roydon vehemently, and he said truly; but then he added more calmly the next moment, “I am still unconvinced by what you have said, in

regard to the feelings of your master. Though he may seek a higher lady as his wife—and, indeed, I know he does—yet he loves this girl, and will seek her par amours, as soon as he has made sufficient way with her; for I persist not in saying that she is his leman. I have been acquainted with him longer than you have—since his boyhood; and he cannot hide himself from me as from others. At all events, that is my affair: I seek revenge, I tell you; and if I think I shall inflict a heavy blow on him, by making this girl your par-amour, and am mistaken, the error will fall on myself. You will gain your ends, if I gain not mine.”

“My paramour!” said Ned Dyrham thoughtfully.

“Ay—or your wife, if you will,” replied the knight; “but, perchance, she will not, till forced, readily consent to be your wife—you understand me. I will give you every surety you may demand, that she shall remain wholly in your power. The course you follow afterwards, must be of your own choosing.”

The great tempter himself could not have chosen better words to work his purpose. It seemed, as if by instinct, that the one base man addressed himself to all that was weak in the other's nature ; and there is a kind of divination between men of similar characters which leads them to foresee, with almost unerring certainty, the effect of particular inducements upon their fellows.

Gradually, Dyram yielded more and more, resolving firmly all the while to do nothing, to aid in nothing, without insuring that his own objects also were attained ; but, in the execution of such schemes, there are always small oversights. Passion so frequently interferes with prudence—the stream grows so much stronger as we are hurried on, that it is scarcely possible to stop when we would ; and, when once the knave or the fool puts power into the hands of another, his own course is as much beyond his direction as that of a charioteer who would guide wild horses with packthread. How strange it is—perhaps the most wonderful of all moral phenomena,—that any

man should trust another in the commission of a bad action !

The question between Sir Simeon of Roydon and his lowlier companion, speedily reduced itself to how Ella Brune was to be separated from those who could afford her protection ; but the knight soon pointed out a means, instructed as he was by another, who kept himself in the dark.

“ These people,” he said, “ with whom she resides, are known to be the followers of a new sect of heretics, which has sprung up in a distant part of Germany, and is similar to our own Lollards, only their apostle is named Huss, instead of Wicliffe. The girl herself is more than suspected of favouring these false doctrines. Such things are matters of no moment in your eyes or mine ; but the zealous priesthood, fearful for their shaken power, are resolute to put such blasphemous notions down ; and, if you can but discover when these Bruness go to one of their assemblies, which are kept profoundly secret, we can ensure that they shall be arrested. The girl, then left alone,

shall be placed at your disposal. If she will fly with you from Ghent, for fear of being implicated, well. If not, on your bringing me the information, you shall have a sufficient sum of money to hire unscrupulous friends, and carry her whithersoever you will."

"But if she should accompany them to their assembly," said Ned Dyrham at once, "how shall I ensure that she is not thrown into prison, tortured, perhaps burnt at the stake? No, no—that will never do!"

"All those ifs can be met right easily," answered Simeon of Roydon. "Ere you give any information, you can exact a promise from brother Paul—"

"A promise from brother Paul!" exclaimed Dyrham with a mocking laugh; "what!—trust the promise of a monk!—You are jesting, sir knight. Was there ever promise so sacred, sworn at the altar on the Body of our Lord, that they have not found excuse for breaking or means of evading? Do you judge me a fool, Sir Simeon of Roydon?"

"Not so," rejoined the knight "the danger

did not strike me : but I see it now. It must be obviated, or I cannot expect you to go along with me. Yet, let me consider—methinks it were easily guarded against. Perchance she may not go ; but, if she do, you can go with the party, take what number of men with you you like, and in the confusion that must ensue, rescue your fair maiden. The gates, at this time of night, are not shut till ten ; horses may be ready ; and there is a castle, some five leagues off on the road to Bruges, which I saw and cheapened three days since as a place of residence during my exile. It is vacant now : you can bear her thither. To-morrow, you can speak with father Paul yourself, and make your own terms as to leading him to the place of their meeting, if you discover it.”

“No,” replied Ned Dyrham, “no ; I will not go with him. I will be at their meeting with men I can trust ; so can I be sure that I shall be near at hand to guard her. I will have it under his hand, too, that I am authorized by him to go ; or, perchance, they may burn me likewise.”

“ You are too suspicious, my good friend,” cried the knight with a laugh that rang not quite so merrily as it might have done.

“ A monk ! a monk ! ” answered Dyrham ; “ one can never doubt a monk too much. I will gain the intelligence wanted, sir knight ; but I leave you to prepare this brother Paul to grant me all the security I ask, or he hears not a word from me ; and so, good night !— you shall have news of me soon : ” and, thus saying, he left him.

Simeon of Roydon bent down his head, and thought for several minutes ; but at length he exclaimed, biting his lip, “ He will shear down my revenge to a half—and yet, perhaps, that may be as bitter as death. To be the minion of a varlet !—’Twill be a fiercer, though a slower fire, than that of faggot and stake.”

CHAPTER II.

THE HUSSITES.

IN a large old house, built almost entirely of wood, and situated in one of the suburbs of Ghent, far removed from all the noise and bustle of the more frequented parts of that busy town, there was a large old hall, in former years employed as a place of meeting by the linen weavers ; but which, at the time I speak of, had been long disused for that purpose, when, the trade becoming more flourishing, its followers had built themselves a more splendid structure in the heart of the city.

In this hall were assembled, at a late hour of the day, about fifty personages of both sexes, and apparently of various grades and professions. Some were dressed in rather gay habiliments, some in staid and sober costume, but

fine and costly withal, and some in the garb of the common artizans. The greater number, however, seemed of a wealthy class; but all appeared to know each other; and the rich citizen spoke in brotherly fellowship to the poor mechanic, the well-dressed Burgher's wife nodded with friendly looks to the daughter of her husband's workman. There was one part of the hall, indeed, in which for a moment, there was a momentary bustle caused by a beautiful girl in a mourning garb, of somewhat foreign fashion, expressing apparently a wish to quit the hall; but it was soon quieted; and, a minute or two after, a tall elderly man with white hair, stood up at the end of a long table, having some books laid upon it, while the rest of the assembly sat on benches round, at some little distance, leaving a vacant space in the midst.

After pausing for a minute or two till all was silent, the old man began to speak, addressing his companions in a fine mellow tone, and with a mild persuasive air.

“My brethren!” he said in the Flemish tongue, “although I be an ignorant man, and

not meet to deal with such high matters, you have permitted me to expound to you the opinions of wiser men than myself, and especially of the venerable John Huss, upon things that nearly touch the salvation of all; and on former occasions, I have shown you cause to see that very many corruptions and abominations have, by the wickedness of men, been brought into the Church of Christ. Amongst other points on which we have all agreed, there are these principal ones; that the word of God, first preached by the lowly and the humble to the poor and ignorant, should be laid open to all men, and committed to their own keeping, not being made to be put under a bed or hidden in a bushel, but to be a light shining in darkness, and leading every one in the way of salvation: that the Bible is no more the book of the priests than the book of the people, but is the property of all for the security of their souls. Secondly, we have agreed, that there is but one mediator with God the Father, Jesus Christ our Lord; and that to worship, or invoke, or kneel down to even good and

holy men departed, whom we are wont to call saints, is a gross idolatry, as well as the worship of statues, figures, or cross pieces of wood and stone ; there being nothing that can save us, but faith in our Redeemer, and no intercession available but his ; for, surely, it is a folly to suppose that men, who were sinners like ourselves, have power to help or save others when they have need of the one atonement for their own salvation. Thirdly, we have held, that in the mass there is no sacrifice, Christ having entered in once for all ; and that to suppose that any man, by the imposition of a bishop's hands, receives power to change mere bread and wine into the substance of our Lord's body and blood, is a fond and foolish imagination devised by wicked priests for their own purposes. These were the points touched upon when last we met ; and now, before we proceed farther, let us pray for grace to help us in our examination."

Thus saying, he knelt down at the end of the table—and all the rest, but one, followed his example, turning, and bending the knee

by the benches around. The Hussite teacher raised his eyes and hands to heaven, and then in a loud tone, uttered a somewhat long prayer, followed by the voices of his little congregation.

It was by this time growing somewhat dusk, for the sun must have been half way below the horizon ; and the windows of the hall were narrow and far up ; but nevertheless, when the kneelers raised themselves again at the conclusion of the prayer, and turned round towards the teacher, the eyes of all were fixed on one spot at the end of the table, and a universal cry burst from every lip. With some it seemed to be the sound of terror, with others that of rage and surprise ; and well, indeed, might they feel astonished ; for there, exactly opposite the old man who had led them in prayer, stood a figure frightful to behold, covered with long black shaggy hair, with two large horns upon its head, a pair of wings on its shoulders, swarthy and ribbed like those of a bat, and with the face, apparently of a negro.*

* It may be necessary to remark that the incident here mentioned is not imaginary, but a recorded historical fact, most disgraceful to those who played the treacherous juggle.

Hardly had they time to recover from their surprise, and to ask themselves what was the meaning of the apparition they beheld, when the doors of the hall burst open, and a mixed multitude rushed in, consisting of monks and priests, and the whole train of varlets and serving-men which, in that day, were attached to monasteries, chapters, and other religious institutions in great towns. Staves and swords were plenty amongst them; and, with loud shouts of "Ah, the heretics! Ah, the blasphemers! Ah, the worshippers of Satan!" they rushed on the unhappy Hussites, overpowering them by numbers. No resistance was made; in consternation and alarm, the unhappy seekers of a purer faith rushed towards the doors, and even the windows, in the hope of making their escape. But the attempt was vain; one after another they were caught by their furious enemies, while cries of triumph and savage satisfaction rose up from different parts of the hall, as captive after captive was seized and pinioned.

"We have caught you in the fact," cried one.

“ You shall blaspheme no more !” shouted another.

“ I saw the arch enemy in the midst of them !” added a third.

“ They were in the act of worshipping the devil !” said brother Paul.

“ To the stake with them, to the stake with them !” roared a barefooted friar.

“ You see what you have done,” said Ella Brune to her cousin who stood near with his arms tied. “ This was very wrong of you, Nicholas.”

“ It was,” answered Nicholas Brune in a sorrowful tone ; “ but they can do no harm to you ; for I and others can testify that you came, unknowing whither, and would have left us, if we had allowed you.”

“ Will they believe your testimony ?” asked Ella in a tone of deep despondency.

Before he could answer, brother Paul approached, and gazing at the fair unhappy girl with a malicious smile, he said, “ Ah, ah, fair maiden, I knew your hypocrisy would be detected at length. I did not forget having seen you with the heretics at Liege.”

Even as he spoke, however, there was a bustle at the door ; and to the surprise of all the hall contained, a number of men completely armed appeared, having at their head a gentleman in the ordinary riding dress of the day, with the knightly spurs over his boots, and two long feathers in his cap.

“ Stand there,” he said in a loud voice, turning to the men who followed, “ and let no one forth. Then striding through the hall with the multitude of priests and monks scattering before him, he advanced, gazing from right to left, till he reached the spot where Ella Brune was standing. A low murmur of joy burst from the poor girl’s lips as Richard of Woodville approached ; and she would fain have held out her hands towards him, but that her delicate wrists were tied with a hard cord.

Richard of Woodville gazed from her to father Paul, who stood beside her, with a stern brow ; and then, in a low but menacing voice, exclaimed, “ Untie that cord, foul monk !”

“ I will not,” answered father Paul sullenly.

“Who are you, that you should interrupt the course of justice, and rescue a blasphemous heretic from the stake?”

“Thou liest, knave!” answered Richard of Woodville. “She is a better Catholic than thou art, with all thy hypocritical grimaces;” and unsheathing his dagger, he cut the cord from Ella’s wrist, and set her free.

“Ah, he draws his knife upon us!” cried father Paul. “Upon him! Cleave him down! Are there no brave men here?”

A rush was instantly made towards Richard of Woodville; and one man with a guisarme, thrust himself right in his way; but laughing loud, the young knight bared his long, heavy sword, and waved it over his head, grasping Ella by the hand, and exclaiming in English, “On, my men! on! Open a way, there!”

All but the most resolute of his opponents scattered from his path; and his stout followers forced their way forward into the hall, showing some reverence for the priests and monks it is true; but striking the varlets and serving-men sundry heavy blows with the pommels

of the swords, not easily to be forgotten. A scene of indescribable confusion ensued; the darkness of the hall was becoming every moment more profound—a number of the Hussites made their escape, and untied others; while still, through the midst of the crowd, Richard of Woodville slowly advanced towards the door, and knocking the guisarme out of the hand of one of the men who seemed most strongly bent on opposing his passage, he brought the point of his sword to his throat, exclaiming, “Back, or die!”

The sturdy varlet laid his hand upon his dagger; but, at the same moment, one of the English archers who had reached his side, struck him on the jaws with his steel glove, and knocked him reeling back amongst the crowd. Quickening his pace, Richard of Woodville hurried on, still holding Ella by the hand, and soon reached the top of the narrow stairs. There pausing at the door, he counted the number of his men, who had closed in behind him, to see that none were left, and then hastened down with his fair charge into the street, several

other fugitive Hussites passing him as they fled with all the speed of terror.

As soon as they had reached the open road, the young Englishman turned to his followers, and ordered three of them to remain a step or two behind, to ensure that they were not taken by surprise, and to give notice if they were pursued. But the party of fanatic priests within were busy enough, in the wild riotous scene presented by the hall, now in almost total darkness, and often mistook one man for another in endeavouring to secure the prisoners that still remained in their hands. Thus Woodville and his companions were suffered to proceed on their way unfollowed through numerous long and narrow streets, till they reached the inn where they had first alighted on their arrival in Ghent.

“Quick,” cried Richard of Woodville to one of his attendants, “Saddle four horses and the mule; and you with Peter and Alfred be ready to set out. You must leave Ghent with all speed, my poor Ella,” he continued, leading her into the inn, “I cannot go with with you my-

self, but you shall hear from me soon, and the men will take care of you."

"I must go first to my cousin's house," said Ella eagerly. "'Twill not take long to run thither and return. There are many things that I must take with me."

"You can pass round there as you go," replied Woodville, "less time will be lost, and there is none to spare. Here, host," he cried, "host I say!" But the host was not to be found; and one of the chamberlains running up as the young knight and his followers stood under the arch demanded, "What's your will, sir?"

"At what time are the city gates closed?" asked Richard of Woodville. "I have to levy men at Bruges for the service of the Duke, and must send some of my people on to-night."

"They do not shut till ten, sir, in this time of peace," replied the chamberlain, "so you have more than an hour; but even after that, an order from the cyndic will open them."

"That will do," replied Richard of Woodville; "they must set out at once."

A moment after, the horses were brought round, with the mule which Ella Brune had ridden from Nieuport, and placing her carefully thereon, the young knight gave some orders to his men in a low tone, added some money for their expenses, and with a kindly adieu to Ella, saw them depart. He then directed two of his archers to superintend the immediate removal of his baggage to the apartments which had been assigned him in the Graevensteen, to see to the care of the horses, and to rejoin him without loss of time. After which, followed by the rest of his attendants, he took his way back to the old castle of the counts of Flanders, and sought the chamber in the basement of one of the towers, which had been pointed out for his own by the Count of Charolois.

At the door stood a stout man-at-arms, whom Woodville had placed there that night after his meeting with Sir John Grey; for it may be necessary to mention here, what we did not pause to notice before, that the young knight had returned with Dyram to the Grae-

vensteen to seek for his men, as soon as he heard of the danger which menaced poor Ella Brune.

Opening the door of the chamber, Richard of Woodville went in, and found Dyrham seated at the table with his head leaning on his arms. He moved but slightly when his master entered, and Woodville, casting himself into a seat opposite, gazed at him for a moment with a stern and angry brow.

“Look up, sir,” he said at length; “in your terror and haste to remedy the evil you have caused, you have spoken too much not to speak more. You once boasted of telling truth. Tell it now, as the only means of escaping punishment.”

“Is she saved?” asked Ned Dyrham, raising his head and gazing in his young master’s face with a look of eager anxiety. “Is she saved? I care for nought else.”

“Yes she is saved,” replied Richard of Woodville, but with peril to her and peril to me. I found her with her hands tied, and what may be the result no one yet can tell.—And so

you love her !” he continued gazing upon him thoughtfully. “A glorious means, indeed, to prove your love !”

“I have been deceived,” said Dyrham, “the villain cheated me. — He promised that she should be mine ; and when I told him of the day and hour when the assembly was to take place, thinking that I kept the power in my own hands, so long as I did not mention where they were to meet, they both laughed me to scorn, and told me they wanted to know no more.”

“They !” exclaimed Richard of Woodville, “they ! whom do you mean ?”

“Brother Paul,” replied Dyrham hesitating, “brother Paul and—Well it matters not, if you learn not from me, you will learn from others, so I will say it first myself—brother Paul and Simeon of Roydon.”

“Simeon of Roydon !” exclaimed the young knight starting up and lifting his hand as if to strike him ; “and have you been villain and traitor enough, to betray this poor girl into the hands of that base and pitiful knave ? By the

Lord that lives, I have a mind to have you scourged through the streets of Ghent, as a warning to all treacherous varlets."

Dyram bent his brows upon him with a bold scowl, answering in a low muttering tone, "You dare not!"

The words had scarcely quitted his lips, when, with a blow on the side of the head, Richard of Woodville dashed him to the ground. The man started up, and drew his dagger half out of the sheath; but his master, who had recovered from his anger the instant the blow was given, so far at least as to be sorry that it had been struck at all, looked at him with a smile of cold contempt, and, raising his voice, exclaimed "Without, there!"

The archer instantly appeared at the door; and, pointing to Dyram, the young knight, said "Take away that knave and put him forth from the castle, and from the band. He is not one of my own people, and unfit to be with them. He is a base and dishonest traitor, who betrays his trust. Away with him!"

Dyram glared upon him for a moment with-

out moving, then thrust his dagger back into the sheath, raised his hand with the right finger extended, and shook it at Richard of Woodville, with his teeth hard set together and a significant frown upon his brow. Then turning to the door, he passed the archer, saying, in a menacing tone, "Touch me not," and quitted the room.

CHAPTER III.

THE RESULT.

“PERHAPS I have been too harsh,” thought Richard of Woodville, when the man Dyram was gone, and he sat alone in his chamber. “Surely that knave’s conscience must be punishment enough. What must it be to think that we have betrayed a friend, violated a trust, injured one who has confided in us! Can Hell itself afford an infliction more terrible than such a memory? Methinks it were torment enough for the worst of men, to render remembrance eternal!”

And he was right—surely he was right. In this world we weave the fabric of our punishment with our sins.

As the young knight proceeded to reflect, however, his mind turned from Dyram to Sir

Simeon of Roydon; and suddenly a light broke in upon him.—“It must be so!” he cried: “’tis this man has poisoned the mind of Sir John Grey against me. But that will be easily remedied.”

The next instant, he suddenly recollected the half-made appointment with Mary’s father, which in all the bustle and excitement of the scenes he had lately gone through, had escaped his memory till that moment; and he started up exclaiming, “This is unfortunate indeed!—There may yet be time—I will go!” But as he turned towards the door, the clock of the castle struck. Nearly an hour had elapsed since the appointed period, for the stealthy foot of Time ever runs fastest when we could wish his stay. Nevertheless, Richard of Woodville went forth, received the pass-word of the guard, and hurried to the inn to enquire whether or not the old knight had come during his absence. He was in some hope that such might not be the case; for Mary’s father had ridden away abruptly without saying whether he accepted the appointment or not. But when

Woodville reached the hostel he found, to his mortification, that Sir John Grey had not only been there, but had waited some time for his return, and had gone away, the host informed him, with a gloomy brow.

Sad and desponding, with all the bright hopes which had accompanied him into Ghent darkened, he strode back to the Graevensteen, and passed through the court to his apartments, remarking that there seemed a number of persons waiting, and a good deal of confusion, unusual at so late an hour; but his thoughts were busy with his own situation; and he walked on in the darkness to his chamber, without enquiry. There, leaning his head upon his hand beneath the light of the lamp, he gave himself up to bitter reflections, thinking how sad it is, that a man's happiness, his name, fame, purposes, abilities, virtues, should be so completely in the power of circumstances—the stones with which fate builds up the prison walls of many a lofty spirit.

While he was thus meditating, there was a knock at his chamber door, and bidding the

applicant come in, the next moment he saw the young Lord of Lens enter. The youth's countenance betokened haste and agitation, and, closing the door carefully, he said, "The Count has just whispered me, to come and warn you, good knight, not to quit your apartments till he comes to you."

"How so?" asked Woodville, partly divining the cause of this injunction. "Do you mean, my young friend, that I am a prisoner?"

"Oh no!" answered the other, "'tis for your own safety. There are enemies of yours in the castle; and perhaps if they were to see you, they might seize you even here. You know not the daring of these men of Ghent, and how, when passion moves them, they set at nought all authority. They would arrest you in the very presence of the Prince, if they thought fit; and they are even now pouring their complaints into the Count's ear. Luckily, however, they know not that you are in the Graevensteen; and, with a show of loyal obedience, of which they have very little in their

hearts, they are affecting to ask permission, as you are one of his knights, to have you sought for in the town to-morrow and apprehended, for something rather rash that you have done this evening."

"I have done nothing rash, my friend," replied Woodville gravely, "but only what I would do again to-morrow, if the case required it—only, in fact, what my knightly oath required: I have but rescued a defenceless woman from wrong and oppression. I can justify myself easily to the Count or any other gentleman of honour."

"Well, wait till he comes," answered the young nobleman; "for though you might be able to set yourself right at last, yet you would ill brook imprisonment, I wot; and perhaps even the Count might not be able to save you from these people's hands, if you were found just now. They are a furious and unruly set; and the priests have got syndics and magistrates of all kinds on their side."

"I have heard tales of their doings," replied Richard of Woodville; "but I cannot bring

myself to fear them. However, I will, of course, obey the Count's commands, and wait here till he is pleased to send for me."

"I will bear you company," replied the young Lord of Lens, "for I love not the presence of these foul citizens; and heaven knows how long they may stay with their orations, as lengthy and as flat as one of their own pieces of cloth."

To say the truth, Richard of Woodville would have preferred to be alone; but he did not choose to mortify the good-humoured young lord by suffering him to perceive that his presence was a restraint; and, sometimes in grave conversation, sometimes in light, they passed nearly an hour; till at length numerous sounds from the court-yard gave notice that the deputation of the good citizens was taking its departure. For half an hour more they waited, in the expectation of soon receiving some messenger from the Count de Charolois, but none appeared; and at length Richard of Woodville besought his companion to seek some intelligence. The young nobleman readily undertook

the task, and opened the door to go out ; but, on the very threshold, was met by the Count himself, followed by the Lord of Croy. The expression of the Prince's countenance was grave and troubled ; and, seating himself, he made a sign to the rest to do so likewise ; and then, looking at Woodville with an anxious and careful smile, he said, " This is an awkward business, my friend."

" If told truly, it is a very simple one, my lord the Count," replied the knight.

" It may be simple, yet have very dangerous results," said the young Prince gravely. " These men of Ghent are not to be meddled with lightly ; and, though their insolence must some day be checked — and shall — yet this is not the time to do it. It seems, by their account, that you brought a pretty light-o'-love maiden with you hither from England ; and that she having been found, with a number of other heretics, worshipping, they assert, the devil himself, who was seen in proper form amongst them" (Woodville smiled) ; " you delivered her with the strong hand from the people

sent to seize the whole party.—What makes you laugh, Sir Richard ?”

“ Because, my good Lord,” replied the young knight, “ you, here in Flanders, do not seem to understand monks and priests so well as we do in England. They have made a fair story of it, which is almost all false. I am as good a Catholic as any of them, though I have not had my head shaved. I believe all that the Church tells me, for I doubt not that the Church knows best ; but I can’t help seeing that she has got a great number of knaves amongst her ministers.”

“ But what is the truth of the story, sir knight ?” said the Lord of Croy. “ I told the Count that I was sure, they had made a mountain of a molehill.”

“ Thanks, my good Lord,” answered Woodville. “ The truth is simply this : the poor girl is a good and sincere Catholic, and has been bitterly tried ; for many of her relations are what we call Lollards, a sort of heretics like your Hussites, and she has stedfastly resisted all their false notions. She was persecuted and ill-treated in England, by a base

and unworthy man — a knight, heaven save the mark !—one Sir Simeon of Roydon, now banished from the English Court for his ill-treatment of her. She having relations in this land, amongst others Nicholas Brune, your goldsmith, sir, quitted London to join them. I found her in the same ship which brought me over ; and, in Christian charity and common courtesy, gave her protection on the way. She is no light-o'-love, my Lord, but a good and honest maiden ; and I would be the last to sully her purity by word or deed. As soon as I reached Ghent, and found out where her cousin dwelt, I placed her safely under his roof, and thought of her no more, accompanying you to Lille. A servant, however, whom I left with my baggage and some spare horses here in Ghent—a clever knave, but a great rogue—was smitten, it seems, by her beauty on the way, and went often to see her. On my return, while I was speaking with Sir John Grey in the street, this man came up unfortunately, and told me, if I did not save her, she was lost. Hurrying along with him to

gather my men together, I found that a certain monk or friar, named Brother Paul, had combined with others, of whom I have since discovered this Simeon of Roydon was one, to seize upon the poor girl, with the whole party of her friends, at a heretic meeting in the old Linen-weavers' Hall. On their promise to give her up to him, this scoundrel servant of mine, Dyram, had betrayed to the cunning monks at what hour the assembly was to be held; but, when he asked for the securities they had promised, that she should be placed in his hands, they laughed him to scorn. He is a persevering knave, however, and by one means or another, gained a knowledge of all their proceedings and intentions, and found that they had dressed up one of their varlets as the arch-enemy, covering him with the skin of a black cow, and setting the horns upon his head. This mummer was to be placed under the table in the hall—as doubtless, he was, for I saw something of the figure when I went in—and as soon as it grew dusk, he was to rise up amongst the heretics, giving

a sign for the others to rush in, — knowing the girl to be a Catholic, as I have said, and free from all taint of this heresy—”

“Then, why went she thither?” demanded the Count de Charolois.

“She told me afterwards, my Lord,” replied the young Englishman, “that her cousin Nicholas and his wife had deceived her, and, anxious to convert or pervert her to their own notions, had taken her to this place without letting her know whither she was going. She says they will acknowledge it themselves, if they are questioned, and also that she strove to go away when she found where she was, but was prevented by them. However, knowing her to be a good Catholic, and certain that the whole matter was contrived out of some malice towards her, I had no hesitation in hastening to her deliverance. I used no farther violence than was needful to set her free, took no part in delivering the others of whose religious notions I knew nothing, and—”

“The greater part of them escaped, it seems,” said the Lord of Croy.

“With that I had nothing to do,” replied Richard of Woodville. “I contented myself with cutting the cords they had tied round the poor girl’s wrists; and making my way with her out of the hall, leaving the monks and their menée to settle the matter with the others as they thought fit.”

“And where is the maiden now, my friend?” asked the Count de Charolois.

“I instantly sent her out of the town with three of my men,” replied Richard of Woodville. “I thought it the surest course.”

The Count looked at the Lord of Croy as if for him to speak; and the young English knight, somewhat hastily concluding that they entertained doubts of his word, exclaimed after a moment’s pause, “I trust that you do not disbelieve me, sir? You cannot suppose that an English gentleman, of no ill repute, would tell you a falsehood in a matter such as this?”

“No, no, my friend, no, no,” replied the Count, “I do not doubt you for a moment. I only look to our good comrade here, to speak what is

very unpleasant for me to say. Indeed, I do not know how to explain it to you; for you will naturally think, that my father's power ought to be sufficient to protect one of his own knights against his own people."

"The truth is, Sir Richard," said the Lord of Croy, "that the citizens of Ghent are an unruly race; and if they once get you in their hands, they may treat you ill. If my Lord the Count were to resist them, there is no knowing what they might do.—I would not answer for it in such a case, that we should not see them in arms before the castle gate, ere noon to-morrow."

"That shall never be on my account, noble Prince," replied the knight turning to the Count; "but, under these circumstances, it were wise in me to quit the town of Ghent."

"That is exactly what I wish to say," answered the Prince; "but, in truth, it seems most ungrateful of me to propose such a thing to you, my friend. Undoubtedly, if you are not pleased to go, I will defend you here to the best of my power; and my father would

soon give us aid in case of necessity ; but I need not tell you, that to have Ghent again in revolt just on the eve of a new war with the Armagnacs in France, might be ruinous to all his schemes, and fatal to his policy. Moreover, if they were to accuse him of countenancing heresy here, it would do him a bitter injury ; for the people in Paris have just pronounced, that the sermon preached by one of his doctors, named Jean Petit, is heretical."

"Well," answered Richard of Woodville, "I can go to Bruges, my Lord, where you said I should find good archers, and can be carrying on my levies there."

The Count shook his head, saying, "That will be no place of safety. These good folks of Ghent, and those of Bruges, so often at deadliest enmity, are now sworn friends ; and the Brugeois would give you up without a thought. No, what I have to propose is this, that you should go an hour or two before daylight to my cousin Waleran de St. Paul, who is now raising troops upon the Meuse. I shall have to pass thither also, for my father sends me into Burgundy,

and I cannot go through France. If you will wait for me between Chimay and Dinant, I will join you within ten days, and we will go on to the west, and raise what men we can at Besançon."

"So be it, my noble Lord," replied Richard of Woodville; "but where shall I find the Count?"

"You will find him at Chimay," replied the young Prince. "He has a castle two leagues thence on the road to Dinant. From me you shall hear before I come. I will meet you somewhere in the Ardennes. Make all your preparations quickly; and, in the meanwhile, I will write letters to my uncles of Brabant and Liege, that you may have favour and protection as you pass."

Richard of Woodville thanked him for his kindness in due terms, and, as soon as the young Count, with the Lords of Croy and Lens had left him, called his servants and gave orders to prepare once more for their immediate departure. Fortunately, it so happened that he had ordered all his baggage to be

brought from the inn, so that no great time was lost ; and in about an hour all was ready to set out. The letters of the young Count, however, had not arrived, and Richard of Woodville waited, pondering somewhat anxiously upon the only difficulty which presented itself to his mind, namely, how he was to recall the men whom he had sent with Ella Brune upon the side of Bruges, without depriving her of aid and protection at the moment when she most needed it. It was true, he thought, she had no actual claim upon him ; it was true that he had done more for her already than might have been expected at his hands, without any motive but that of compassion ; but yet he felt that it would be cruel, most cruel, to leave her in an hour of peril, undefended and alone. “ We take a withering stick and plant it in the ground,” says Sterne ; “ and then we water it because we have planted it ;” and Richard of Woodville was one who felt that the kindness he had shown, did give her a title to expect more.

At first he thought of bidding the men

rejoin him and bring her with them ; but then the glance which Sir John Grey had cast upon him as her name was mentioned, came back to his mind, and he said, "No, that must not be. For her sake and my own, she must go no farther with me. Men might well think if she did, that there were other ties between us than there are. I will bid them take her to England, or place her anywhere in safety, and then come. To Sir John Grey I must write—and to my sweet Mary also. I may well trust her, I hope, to plead my cause and repel the charges which this base villain has brought.—Yet 'tis most unfortunate that this event should have occurred at such a moment."

He was still thinking deeply over these matters, when the door opened and the young Count of Charolois appeared alone. "Here are the letters, my friend," he said. "I have ordered some of my people to go with you for a mile or two beyond the gates, in order to secure you a safe passage. Is there ought I can do for you, while you are absent?"

"One thing, my noble Lord," replied the

young knight, a sudden thought striking him. “If you will kindly undertake to be my advocate with one whose good opinion is to me a matter of no light moment. You must know that Sir John Grey—so long an exile in your father’s dominions, but now empowered by King Henry, to treat in conjunction with Sir Philip de Morgan at the Court of Burgundy—has one daughter plighted to me by long love, by her own promises, and by her father’s also ; but some scoundrel, the same, I do verily believe, who has made all this mischief—I mean Sir Simeon of Roydon—has brought charges against me to that good knight, which have altered his countenance towards me. Called suddenly away, I have no means of explanation ; and I leave my name blighted in his opinion. The accusation, I believe, refers to this poor girl Ella Brune ; but you may tell Sir John, and I pledge you my knightly word, you will tell him true, that there is nought between her and me but kindness rendered on my part to a woman in distress, and gratitude on hers to one who has protected her.”

“I will not fail,” replied the young Prince, giving him his hand, “nor will I lose any time before I explain all as far as I know it.” Thus saying, he walked out with Woodville into the court where the horses stood prepared; and, in a few minutes, the young wanderer was once more upon his way.

CHAPTER IV.

TRUE LOVE'S DEFENCE.

IN one of the best houses in the best part of Ghent, and in a chamber hung with splendid tapestry, and ornamented with rich carvings of dark oak, sat a fair lady, with a bright and happy face—the rounded chin with its small dimple resting on a hand as white as marble, and as soft as satin. The dark brown eyes, full of cheerful light, were raised towards the gilt roses on the ceiling, as if counting them; but the thoughts of Mary Markham, or, as we must henceforth call her Mary Grey, were full of other things; and if she was counting anything, it was the minutes, till her father should return from the Cours des Princes, and tell her, who had come back to Ghent with the young Count of Charolois. She was, as the

reader knows, of a hopeful disposition—that most bright and blessed of all frames of mind—that lightener of the labours of the world, that smoother of the rough ways of life : and Mary had already hoped, that perchance, when the door opened and her father's form appeared—another, well loved too, might be beside him. For, on her first arrival, Sir John Grey had spoken to her much of Richard of Woodville, had praised him, as she was proud to hear him praised ; and had smiled to see the colour come into her cheek, as if he meant to say, “ Fear not ; you shall be his.”

True, for the last two days he had not mentioned his name ; but that she thought might be accidental ; and now her father did not come so soon as he had promised ; but then, she fancied that this Court ceremony might have been long and tedious, or that other business might have detained him after the reception was over.

Minute upon minute passed however ; one hour went by after another ; day fled, and night came on ; and after gazing some time upon the flickering fire on the wide hearth ; for

the evening was somewhat cold, though spring had well nigh made way for summer, Mary rang the little silver bell before her, and bade the servant bring her light to work.

The man obeyed ; and when the sconce, protruding through the tapestry by a long gilded arm, was lighted, she said, “ Is not my father long ? ”

“ He has been back, lady,” replied the man ; “ but did not dismount, only giving some orders to Hugh, and saying, that if Sir Philip de Morgan came, to tell him he would be here in about two hours.”

“ How long was that ago ? ” demanded Mary Grey. The man replied, “ more than an hour ; ” and, with this intelligence, she was forced to rest satisfied. Not long after she heard a step and her heart beat ; but, listening eagerly, she perceived that the sound gave no hope that there were two persons approaching ; and with a sigh she plied the busy needle. The next instant her father came in ; and though he kissed her tenderly, with long denied affection, she could see that his face was clouded and somewhat stern.

“ I have kept you late from supper, my sweet child,” he said ; “ but I had business which took me away after my visit to the Prince.”

“ Not pleasant business I fear, noble father,” replied Mary, hanging on his arm, “ for you look sad.”

Sir John Grey gazed on her for a moment or two, with a look of melancholy interest and affection. She had never seen such an expression on his countenance before, but when he had taken leave of her to quit his native land as an exile ; and it seemed prophetic of misfortune. “ What has happened, my dear father ? ” she exclaimed ; “ has any new misfortune befallen you ? ”

“ No,” answered Sir John Grey, “ and yet I must say yes, too ; for that which is sad for you, must be sad for me, Mary.”

“ He is dead ! he is killed ! ” cried Mary Grey, her sunny cheek growing deadly pale ; but her father hastened to relieve her on that score.

“ No, Mary,” he said gravely, “ he is not dead ; but he is unworthy.”

The blood rushed up again into her face, as if some one had accused her of a crime ; but the next moment she laughed, gaily answering, " No, my father, no ! Some one has deceived you.—That is impossible.—Richard of Woodville cannot be unworthy."

" Alas ! my sweet child, 'tis you deceive yourself," replied the knight ; " the confidence of love speaks out before you know the facts."

" I know one fact, my father," answered Mary, " which none can contradict ; and which is my answer to all that can be said. For many a long year I have known him. In youth and manhood I have watched him well : and there is not a truer heart on earth. If any one say that his courage has failed in the hour of peril, it is false, my father. If any one say that he has betrayed his friend, it is false. If any one say, that he has deceived, even by word, man or woman, high or low, it is false. If any one say, that he has forgotten his duty, broke his plighted word, wronged his king, his country, you, or me, believe it not, for it is false, my father."

“These are the words of love, my Mary,” replied Sir John Grey; “but though I would fain shield that dear bosom through life from every shaft of sorrow, pain, and disappointment, yet, my sweet child, I would rather see you suffer, bitterly though it might be, than regard what I have to tell you of this youth with that light indifference which some might show. He left his native land, Mary, plighted and pledged to you; telling you he went to seek honour for your sake; and yet he brought hither with him a fair leman, to soothe his idle hours with songs and dalliance. Was this worthy, Mary.—Nay, doubt it not; for I have it from three several sources; and his own conduct to myself confirms the tale.”

He thought to see tears, or at least thoughtful looks; but Mary once more laughed gaily; and holding her father's arm with her fair hand, gazed merrily in his face. “Alas!” she said, “how men are fond of mischief! and what chance can a poor defenceless woman have to escape scandal, when you powerful lords of earth so slander one another? Forgive me, my dear

father ; but I needs must laugh, to think that any one here, in a foreign land, should take the pains, from pure malignity to my poor knight, to try thus sillily to trouble the peace of Mary Grey, by poisoning her parent's mind against her lover. Poor Ella Brune ! little did she think, or little did I think when I bade her go, what evil to her kind and generous benefactor might be done, by her coming with him. I have an antidote to the poison, my dear father ; and thanks to that generous candour which made you condescend to tell your child all the plain truth, I can apply it.—I know this girl, my father—I know the whole history. I am even art and part in the offence ; or rather it is mine, not his. She is my paramour, not Richard's ;” and Mary blushed brightly, while even in her laughing eyes a dewy drop of emotion rose up and sparkled, as she defended him she loved.

“ Your words are strange, dear one,” said the knight ; “ but let me hear more. Tell me the whole, my child.”

“ That I will do,” replied Mary. “ I will

tell you the whole tale after supper, and hers is a very sad one. But first, to set your mind fully at ease, let me say, that the only evil thing Richard has done in all this affair, was showing some want of courtesy to the poor girl herself; for when, after having received from him kind and generous protection in her hour of sorrow and of danger, she thought to journey to join her friends in Burgundy, under the safeguard of his little band—Richard, fearing too much what men might say, or perchance, fancying that Mary might be jealous, unkindly refused to take her; and it was I who bade her go, and promised her that, with a free heart, I would let all idle fancies pass me by as evening winds.”

“Your love is very confiding, my sweet child,” replied the knight.

“And it will never be wronged,” said Mary warmly. “I would not have given it, father, to one unworthy of such trust; and when the confidence ends, the love will end with it. But that will never be.”

“Yet, my dear child,” answered the knight

gravely, "as I told you I had, in the very first instance, an intimation of this fact from some unknown hand, and then—"

"Some idle mischief-maker," cried Mary, "who chanced to see them on the road, and in his own fancy made the evil he would ascribe to Richard."

"But then comes another, lately arrived from England," continued Sir John Grey, "a gentleman of good repute, who tells the same story with strange exactness, if it be false; and then, when questioned by me, Sir Philip de Morgan says, with a worldly laugh at young men's follies, that he has heard something of it."

"But who was this man from England?" asked Mary eagerly, "this gentleman of good repute?—I doubt, my father! I doubt!—Me-thinks I could name him at once."

"Do so, then," replied her father; "I will tell you if you are right."

"Simeon of Roydon," said his daughter; and the knight nodded his assent. "A gentleman of good repute!" cried Mary; "a false

and perjured knave, my father! One who has already foully slandered poor Harry Dacre, yet, with a craven cautiousness, has kept himself free from the lance's point; one who dare not, before Richard of Woodville's face, say ought but, that he has heard such reports—that he vouches not for them—that he mentioned them in thoughtlessness. Out upon the base ungenerous hound! Why this very man, for his shameless persecution of this poor girl, and on the bold accusation of good Sir Philip Beauchamp, my second father, is banished from England for two years, and vowed revenge on her and all of us. Had it not been for the King's presence, I believe, noble Sir Philip would have crushed him as an earwig or a wasp."

"And is it so?" exclaimed Sir John Grey. "This makes a great change, indeed, my child; for if the teller of a tale be a villain, we may well judge that his story will have some scoundrel object. Nor can I doubt," he continued with a smile, "that this poor girl, of whom so much has been said, is not what they call her;

for, though your eyes might be blinded by love, dear girl, my noble friend Sir Philip is not likely to be affected by any tender self-deceit."

Mary laughed gaily. "That he is not," she said. "Nay love is with him, my father, but another name for folly.—Did I not tell you right, that whoever has assailed the name of Richard of Woodville is a false knave?"

"I trust it may be so," replied her father; "but yet, dear Mary, we must not forget that, long ere this Sir Simeon of Roydon uttered a word, some one unknown wrote to me the self-same tale."

"It was himself, or some one like him," answered Mary Grey.

"It could not be himself," rejoined the knight; "for he was not yet in Flanders when the letter came."

"Is there but one slanderer in the world, dear father?" replied the fair girl, raising her eyes almost reproachfully to her parent's countenance; "and should we even doubt the conduct of one, whom for many a long year we

have seen walk in truth and honour, because some nameless calumniator breathes a tale against him?"

"We should not," replied Sir John Grey firmly; "yet such is the world's justice, my child, and such is, I fear, the heart of man—ready to doubt, prone to suspect, and instructed by its own weakness in the weakness of others. However, you have well pleaded your lover's cause, my Mary; and he shall have full and patient hearing to explain whatever yet remains obscure."

"Is there ought obscure?" asked Mary Grey. "To me his whole conduct seems, as it ever has been, light as day."

"Yes," answered the knight; "but yet, Mary, even while I spoke with him to night—"

"What, is he here?" cried Mary Grey, interrupting him, and clasping her hands with eager joy; "and have you seen him—spoke with him?—How did he look, my father?—Well, but not too happy when he was away from me, I dare to say."

"Well, he certainly seemed," replied her

father with a smile ; “ and anything but happy, my dear child ; but, as I was going to add— even while I spoke with him upon these most serious charges, a man came up and plucked him by the sleeve, beseeching him to come to Ella Brune. His whole countenance changed at the name ; and, though he had fixed to meet me within two hours, he failed in his appointment. I waited for him as long as he could decently expect, and then came hither, doubting no longer that the tale was true.”

Mary paused thoughtfully, and cast down her eyes ; but then a moment after she raised them again with a look of relief, as if she had settled the whole in her own mind. “ I will be warrant,” she said, “ that some great peril has beset our poor Ella, and that he has gone to deliver her : most likely the hateful persecution of this same base man. Nothing else— nothing, I know, would have kept Richard of Woodville away from Mary Grey—if, indeed, he knew that I was here.”

“ Nay, I must do him justice,” answered the knight ; “ he did not know it, Mary ; and per-

haps what you suppose is the case, for the man did mention something of danger, and besought him to save her. We will look upon it in as fair a light as may be, and I will send to him early in the morning to bid him come hither and explain. He will then have two advocates instead of one, my child ; and I am very ready to be convinced, for I love him for his love to you."

"Can you not send to-night?" whispered Mary Grey, resting her hands upon her father's arm.

"Nay, nay," replied the knight, smiling kindly on her. "It is late to-night, dear girl. To-morrow will do."

Does to-morrow ever do?—But seldom ; for the hour that is, we can only call our own. All that is to come is in the hands of that dark mysterious fate, which, ruling silent and unseen the acts and wills of men, reserves to itself, in its own dim council-chamber, each purpose unfulfilled, each resolution made and not performed ; sporting with chances and with hopes, trampling into dust expectations and designs,

and leaving to man but the past for his instruction, and the present for his energies. The word to-morrow should be blotted out from the catalogue. It is what never exists in the form we think to find it; and thus it was with Sir John Grey. When the morning came he wrote briefly to Richard of Woodville, requesting him to come to him, and making the tone of his epistle more kindly than his words the night before; but it was returned unopened from the Graevensteen, with the tidings that the young knight and all his band had set out on some expedition a few hours after midnight. As she heard the answer, the gay and happy eyes of Mary Grey filled with sad tears; and her father gazing on her, reproached himself for having lost the moment that was theirs.

CHAPTER V.

THE RESCUE.

It was a sultry summer morning in the midst of July, and there was a dull oppressive weight in the air, although neither mist nor cloud hung upon the lazy wings of a south wind, when an armed party rode through the deep forest of Auvillers, a part of the ancient Ardennes. Road, properly so called, there was none ; but yet the way, though somewhat difficult to find for those not accustomed to all the intricacies of the wood, was not difficult to travel ; for no care had been taken to plant new trees where old ones had fallen by the stroke of Time or the axe ; all had been left to nature, and thus amidst the thick copses and the tall groves of old trees, wide open spaces and long uncovered tracks had spread here and there,

over which the soft turf afforded pleasant footing for man or beast. True, the whole district was rocky and mountainous, and without a guide, the wanderer might have found it a wearisome journey in a sultry day, having to climb a high hill in one place, or wind in and out to avoid the long projecting cliffs of slaty stone in another. But for one directed by any persons well acquainted with the track, the journey was far more easy; and by choosing the proper breaks in the forest, and the long spaces which lay midway up the hills, he might ride along for many miles, without having to ascend any mountain, or deviate very greatly from a straight course, on account either of the wood or of the rocks.

Such was the course followed by the party of which I speak, under the direction of a tall powerful man, clothed from head to heel in steel; for those were not times, nor was that a part of the country in which men of rank and station could travel in safety without being armed in proof. Waleran de St. Paul, indeed, might better have risked his life with scanty

arms and few attendants, than any other noble of the day, in that district; for he was well known and generally beloved by the lesser lords around; and his redoubted name rendered it a somewhat fearful task to strive with him, even if taken unprepared; but it would still have been a hazardous experiment, for in those remote and uncultivated tracks, bordering upon several great states, and very uncertain in their attachment to any, numerous bands of wild and lawless men took refuge, and, secure from the arm of justice, lived a life of plunder and oppression, only varied by the mimic warfare of the chase. None of the great nobles in the vicinity—generally engaged in the civil strifes and incessant broils of their own countries—had time to suppress them, even if they had the inclination. But it may well be doubted whether they felt at all disposed to put down, with the strong hand, the troops of roving plunderers which at that time infested the great forests that stretched along the banks of the Meuse and the Moselle; for in those very bands they frequently found a sort of *dépôt* for brave and

determined followers, from which their forces might at any moment be recruited for a short space of time. It is, moreover, whispered that in many instances, the more civilised and polite of the powerful barons round, were accustomed to exact a certain share of the plunder from their marauding neighbours, as the price of toleration ; and the inferior lords sometimes shared the peril as well as the spoil ; and received as welcome guests into their strong castles the leaders of the freebooters, when any accidental reverse of fortune rendered the green wood no longer a secure abode.

Such was the state of the land through which now rode the Lord of St. Paul, still holding the sword, if not the office of Constable of France, with Richard of Woodville by his side, and a train of about forty men-at-arms behind them ; so that all peril from their somewhat covetous neighbours of the Ardennes, was unthought of by either ; and the beauty of the scene, the heat of the day, their approaching meeting with the young Count of Charolois, the state of France, and the probability of speedy deeds

of arms, were the subjects of the conversation.

The landscapes, indeed, were most lovely as they proceeded. Beneath, upon the left, sloped down the hill side, here and there covered with green wood, here and there broken with wild and rugged rocks; but everywhere so much below them, that the eye could generally catch the shining course of the Meuse, wandering on with a thousand sinuosities, and could then roam at large over the wide and varied country on the other side, sometimes reaching distant towns and cities many leagues away, sometimes checked by a bold mountain near at hand. Above rose the hills with their woody garmenture, from which would often start out a high grey cliff of cold slaty stone, sheer up and perpendicular as a wall; or at other times would rise a conical peak, smooth at the sides, or broken into points; and, through many of the gorges that they passed, perched upon isolated hills that seemed inaccessible, were seen the towers and walls of some stern feudal fortress, frowning down the valley as if prognosticat-

ing woe to the traveller who ventured there alone.

Of each of these castles the Lord of St. Paul had some tale or anecdote; and he kindly strove to amuse the mind of his young companion by the way; but though Woodville listened with all due courtesy, ay, and admired the beauty of the land, and answered with a calm and ready mind, yet it was evident, his cheerful gaiety was gone, at least for the time, and that his thoughts were preoccupied by sadder themes, which only spared his attention for a moment, to reply to the words addressed to him, and then recalled it immediately to himself.

“ You seem sad, sir knight,” said the Lord of St. Paul at length; “ I trust that with the letters from the noble Count, which seemed to me full of all joyance, you received no evil tidings? ”

“ Tidings, most strange, my redoubted lord,”* replied Richard of Woodville; “ for while

* This term was greatly affected at the period we speak of, not only by Kings, but by all powerful Nobles.

the Count speaks cheerfully of having removed all cause of difference between myself and a noble gentleman, Sir John Grey, on whom my best hopes depend, letters from that knight himself are filled with reproaches undeserved by me, and refuse all explanation or argument."

"That is strange, indeed," said the Count; "what are the dates? One may have been written earlier than the other."

"The dates are the same," answered Richard of Woodville, "and the letters of Sir John Grey, coming by the same messenger as those of the Count, might easily have been stopped, had the explanation been given after they were written. It is a dark and misty life we lead in this world; and still, when we think all is clear and bright, as I did when I returned from Lille to Ghent, some thick vapour spreads over the whole, concealing it from our eyes, like the cloud now rolling round the brow of the castle on that high rocky steep."

"We shall have rain," remarked the Lord of St. Paul, "and when it does begin, it will prove

a torrent. Here, old Carloman," he continued, turning to one of his men at arms, "what does that cloud mean; and where can we best wait for the noble Prince, the Count of Charolois, who is to meet us at the Mill Bridge?"

"The cloud means a heavy storm, my lord," replied the old man riding forward. "Do you not see how the earth gapes for it? But it will not be able to swallow all that will come down I think. We have not had a drop of rain these two months, and very little dew, so that everything is as parched as pulse. Then, as to waiting for the Prince, the meadows by the river would be the best place if it were not for that cloud."

"Oh, we mind not a little rain," answered the Count of St. Paul; "'twill but make the armourers' fingers ache to take off the rust to-night."

"Ay, 'tis not the rain I am thinking of," said the old man; "but the meadows are no safe resting-place, when there are storms above there. The water gathers in the gulleys, and comes down into the Sormonne, till the old

fool can hold no more, and then the whole valley is covered."

"Oh, but if that be the case, we can easily gallop up higher," replied the Count, "there is no shame in running away from a torrent, old Carloman. 'Tis not like turning one's back on the foe."

"Faith that is a foe that gallops quicker than you can," answered the man-at-arms. "The meadow is so narrow, and the bank so high, that you cannot cut across; so you had better stop above, in what we call the Rock Castle, where you can see the country below, and the mill bridge and all, without getting in the way of the water. The old Sormonne is a lion I can tell you, when he is angry; and nothing makes him so fierce as a storm in the hills."

"Well, be it so," answered his lord, "you shall be our governor, good Carloman."

"Then keep up higher, dread sir," replied the man-at-arms. "See," he added, as they passed a little brook that was running down a narrow ravine, all troubled and red, "it has

begun farther to the east already ; and it is coming against the wind. That is a sign that it will be furious, though not long-lived."

The Count and his party rode on somewhat quickening their pace ; and though they heard occasionally a distant roar, showing that there was thunder somewhere, no lightning was seen, and the wind still continued blowing faintly from the south-west. The clouds, however, crept over the sky, approaching the sun with their hard leaden edges, and to the north and east, covering the whole expanse with a deep black wall broken and rugged at its summit, as if higher hills and rocks of slate and marble were rising from the bosom of the mountain scene into the heavens above. Over the deep curtain of vapour, indeed, here and there floated detached, some small paler clouds ; and others seemed hurrying up from the south, where all had been hitherto clear, as if drawn by some irresistible power towards the adamant-like mass, in the north-east. From one of these as they passed over-head, a few heavy drops fell, but then ceased ; and still the sun

shone out, as if in scorn of the black enemy that rose towering towards him. A deep stillness, however, fell upon the scene. There is generally in the risen day an unmarked but all pervading sound of busy life, composed of many different noises mingled in the air. According to the season of the year and hour, it varies of course. Sometimes it is full of the song of birds, the voices of the cattle, the hum of insects, the rush of streams, the whispering of the wind, the rustle of the trees, and a thousand other undistinguished sounds to which the ear pays no heed. But when they all or most of them cease, it is strange how we miss the murmur of creation — what a want, what a vacancy there seems! So was it now; and, turning to Richard of Woodville, the Lord of St. Paul remarked, “How silent everything has become!”

“It is generally so before a thunderstorm,” answered the young knight. “In my country we judge whether it will be merely rain or something more by the conduct of the cattle. If after a drought, we are going to have re-

freshing showers, the sheep and oxen seem to hail it with their voices ; but if there be lightning coming, everything is silent."

Almost immediately after he had spoken, there was a bright flash, not very near, but dazzling ; and some drops fell while the thunder followed at a long interval. Spurring on, they rode forward for about two miles farther ; and as they went, every little gorge and hollow way had its minor torrent coming down thick and turbulent, though the rain, where the Count and his party were, had not become violent, pattering slowly upon their arms and housings, and spotting the sleek coats of the horses with marks like damascene work. The river, which they were now approaching nearer, might be seen swelling and foaming in its bed, its crowded waters curling in miniature whirlpools along the edge, and rising higher and higher up the bank, as the innumerable tributaries from the mountains poured down continual accessions to the flood.

At length, the old man-at-arms exclaimed, "To the right, my Lord," and passing through

a narrow opening between the great belt of wood, and a small detached portion that ran farther down the hill, they entered a sort of natural amphitheatre crowned with old pines, and carpeted at the bottom of the crags with soft green turf spread over the rugged and undulating surface of ground. Numerous immense masses of rock, however, detached from the hills above, and rolled down in times long past, started out from the greensward bare and grey; and here and there would rise up a group of old oaks or beeches, while on the stony fragments themselves was often perched an ash or a fir, like a plume in the helmet of a knight.

In front of this amphitheatre the trees sloped away both to the right and left, leaving a wide open space gradually descending the hill, so that from most parts of the Castle of Rocks, as it was called, a considerable portion of the course of the Sormonne might be seen, the nearest point being somewhat less distant than a quarter of a mile. Directly in front was a double wooden bridge spanning over the stream, which

was there divided by a low island of very small extent, which served but as a resting-place for the piles of the two bridges, and for a mill, which gave the name to that particular spot. Beyond, on the opposite side of the water, was an undulating plain of several miles in extent, bounded by hills all round, but open to the eye of St. Paul and his party as they stood in the midst of the amphitheatre.

“Is not this the best place now, my Lord?” asked old Carloman. “You can, not only see here, but you can find shelter, and need not get your arms rusted, or your horses wet, unless you like. There, under the cliff where it hangs over, you can post two-thirds of the men; and as the storm comes the other way, not a drop will reach them. Then, as for the rest, they can get under this rock in front, where they will be quite dry, if they keep close.”

“I will stay here,” replied the Count of St. Paul. “You lodge the others, Carloman.”

“I will keep you company, my Lord,” said Richard of Woodville; “and if we dismount, we shall be better able to shelter the horses.”

Such was the plan followed; and all the troop, men and horses, were under shelter before the storm became violent. Nor, indeed, did the thunder ever reach that grand and terrible height which it frequently does attain in wood-covered mountains: the rain seemed to drown it; but the deluge which soon fell from the sky was tremendous. In long lines of black and grey it poured straight down, mingled with hail and every now and then crossed by the faint glare of the lightning. The distant country was hidden by the misty veil, and even the nearer scene of the bridge and the mill, the only dwelling in the neighbourhood, grew indistinct.

The Lord of St. Paul and Richard of Woodville, endeavoured in vain to descry the plain on the opposite side of the river, in expectation of seeing the train of the Count of Charolois coming from the side of Avesnes. Nothing could they distinguish beyond a hundred yards from the opposite bank; and they mutually expressed a hope that the Prince might have been delayed in the more culti-

vated country to the west, where he would find shelter from the storm.

“He cannot surely be already in the mill?” said the Count: “there seem a great many people at that casement looking up the stream. How many men did he say he would bring, Sir Richard?”

“Two hundred horse,” replied Richard of Woodville; “he cannot be there, my good Lord; yet there seems a number of heads too.— Good heaven! how the stream is rising! ’Tis nearly up to the road-way of the bridge.”

“It will be higher than that before it is done, sir knight,” observed one of the men-at-arms. “I have seen the bridge carried away twice since I was a boy.”

“Here comes a boat down the stream,” said Richard of Woodville.

“Ay, we passed one a little way further up,” replied the same man who had spoken before; “it has broken away, I dare say.”

“That is not a boat,” exclaimed the Lord of St. Paul, after gazing for a moment; “it is the thatch of a cottage. Heaven have mercy upon

the poor people !” and lifting the cross of his sword to his lips, he kissed it, and muttered a prayer.

At the same moment a number of men, some evidently of inferior rank, and some in garbs which betokened higher station, ran out of the mill ; and Woodville could then perceive that, almost close to the door, between the building and the bridge, the water had risen over the low shore of the islet, so as to be up to the knees of those who came forth. He fancied at first that they were about to make their escape over the bridge ; but he saw that several of them were armed with long poles ; and turning to the man-at-arms who seemed well acquainted with the country, he enquired what they were about to do.

“ To draw the broken cottage-roof to the shore, sir knight, I suppose,” replied the other, “ lest it should damage the bridge.”

“ See, there comes down a bull !” cried the Count ; “ how furiously he struggles with the stream.—Ha ! they have caught the roof with their hooks. They have got it—no !”

They had indeed obtained for a moment some hold upon the heavy mass of timber and straw that came rushing down, and were dragging it towards the little island ; but the stream was increasing so rapidly, and pouring such a body of water upon the land where they stood, that one of the men slipped, and let go his pole, glad enough to be dragged out of the eddy by those behind.

The roof at the same moment swang round and disengaged itself. The bull, still struggling with the torrent, was dashed against the bridge and recoiled. The heavy mass of thatch and wood-work was borne forward upon him with the full force of the stream, and crushed him between itself and the piers. A shrill and horrible cry—something between a roar and a scream, burst from amidst the fierce rushing sound of the overwhelming waters ; the whole mass of the floating roof was cast furiously upon the weaker part of the bridge in the centre, already shaken by the torrent ; and with an awful crash the whole structure gave way, and was borne in fragments down the stream.

“The flood has reached the mill,” said the Count of St. Paul, turning to the man-at-arms; “is there no danger of it’s being carried away, too?”

“The miller would tell you, none, my dreaded Lord,” replied the soldier; “but every day is not like to-day; and what has happened once may happen again. He always says there is no danger, since he put up an image of the blessed Virgin over the door; but I recollect when I was a little boy, and lived at Givet, that island was six feet under water, and, where there was a mill in the morning, you could row over in a boat at night. They were all drowned, this man’s uncle and all.”

“Why are you stripping of your casque and camail, Sir Richard?” asked the Count.

“Because I imagine they may soon want help, my good Lord,” replied the young knight.

“Madness!” cried the Lord of St. Paul; “no man could swim such a torrent as that.”

“I do not know that, noble sir,” answered Richard of Woodville; “we are great swimmers in my country, and accustomed to buffet

with the waves. But there is a boat higher up. I will first try that, and if that sinks, swimming must serve me."

"I will not suffer it!" exclaimed the Count; "neither boat nor man could live in such a rushing torrent as that."

"Indeed, my good Lord, you must," replied the young knight gravely. "My life is of no great value to myself, or any one, now; and, though I know not who these good folks are, they shall not be lost before my eyes, without an effort on my part to deliver them. See, see!" he cried, "some one waves to us from the window!" and, casting off his corslet, and all his heavy armour, he was hurrying down. But the Count caught him by the arm with a glowing cheek, saying, "Stay, stay, yet a little. They are in no danger yet. The stream may not rise higher."

"But, if it does, they are lost," answered Woodville, gently disengaging his arm.

"Then I will go with you," said the Count.

"No, no, my Lord!" replied the young knight; "you would but fill the boat, which

is small enough. One man is better than a thousand there. If I die, divide my goods amongst my men—send my ring to my sweet lady ; and farewell.”

Thus saying, he sped on to the very brink of the water, which, instead of decreasing, was still rising rapidly. There, he tried to make the people of the mill hear him, and they shouted from the casement in reply, but the roaring of the torrent drowned their words ; and, hurrying up to the spot where he had seen the boat moored, he found it, now far out from the actual brink of the stream, swaying backwards and forwards with the eddies. The top of the post, to which it was attached by a chain, and which, an hour before, had been some yards on shore, was now just visible above the rushing waters ; but, wading in, the young knight caught the chain, and drew the boat to him.

It was luckily flat, and somewhat heavy in its build ; so that he managed to get in without upsetting it, but not without difficulty. The only implements, however, which he found

to guide its course, were one paddle and a large pole with an iron hook, such as he had seen in the hands of the people of the mill. But he had no hesitation, — no fear; and, throwing loose the chain, he guided the boat into the middle of the stream, where, though the current was stronger, the eddies were less frequent. There it was borne forward with terrible rapidity towards what had been the island, but was no longer to be distinguished from the rest of the stream but by the foaming ripple on either side, and the mill rising in the midst.

The bank of the river, on the eastern side, was crowded by his own attendants and the followers of the Count of St. Paul; the windows of the mill, and a little railed platform above the wheel, showed a multitude of anxious faces. No one spoke—no one moved, however, but two stout Englishmen, who were seen upon the shore, stripping off their arms and clothing; while the timbers of the mill, and the posts and stanchions of the platform, quivered and shook with the roaring tide as it

whirled, red and furious, past them, lingering in a curling vortex round, as if unwilling to dash on without carrying every obstacle along with it.

Richard of Woodville raised not his eyes to look at those who hung between death and life: he turned not to gaze at his companions on the shore: he knew that every energy, every thought was wanted to accomplish the great object; and, if he suffered his mind to stray, for even a single instant to other things, it was but to think, "I will show those who have belied me that I can risk life, even for beings I do not know!" His eyes were fixed upon one spot, where the boiling of the tide evinced that the ground came near the surface; and there, he determined first to check the furious speed at which he was hurried down the stream. A little farther on, were the strong standards and braces of a mill of those days; and he thought that, if he could break the first rush of the boat at the shallow, he should be able more easily to bring her up under the casements and the platform.

Now guiding with the paddle, now starting up to hold the boat-pike, he came headlong towards the shoal; but, fending off till the speed of the boat was checked, and she swung round with the torrent and drifted more slowly on, he caught at the thick uprights of the mill with the hook—missed the first—grappled the second; and, though almost thrown over with the shock, held fast till the boat swung heavily round, and struck with her broadside against the building. A rope was instantly thrown from above; and, tying it fast through a ring, which was to be found in the bow of all boats in those days, he relaxed his hold of the woodwork, and the skiff floated farther round.

Then first he looked up; and then first a feeling of deadly terror took possession of him. His cheek grew pale; his lips turned white; and, stretching out his arms, he exclaimed, “Oh, Mary!—oh, my beloved! is it you on whom such peril has fallen?—Quick, quick!” he continued, “lose not a moment. The stream is coming down more and more

strong—the building cannot stand. Bear her down quick, Sir John.”

“Poo! the building will stand well enough,” said a man, in a rude jargon of the French tongue. “’Tis but that people are afraid.”

“Fool!” cried Richard of Woodville, who saw the timbers quivering as if shaken by mortal agony; “if you would save your life, come down with the rest.”

“Not I,” answered the miller with a laugh; “I have seen as bad floods before now. Here, lady, here—set a foot upon the wheel; it is made fast, and cannot move. Catch her, young gentleman:—nay, not so far, or you will upset the boat—that will do,—there she is;” and Richard of Woodville, receiving Mary Grey in his arms, seated her in the stern of the boat, and again advanced to aid her women and the old knight in descending. Two fair young girls, a young clerk in a black gown, and three armed servants formed the train, and they were the first to take refuge in the boat, leaving their horses behind them. There were three other men remained above, and

laughed lightly at the thought of danger ; but one young lad, of fifteen years of age, though he too said he would stay, bore a white cheek and a wandering eye.

“ Send down the boy, at least,” cried Richard of Woodville to the miller ; “ though you may be fool-hardy, there is no need to sacrifice his life.”

“ Go, go, Edmé,” said the miller ; “ you are as well there as here.—You can do us no good.”

The boy hesitated ; but the increasing force of water made the mill tremble more violently than ever ; and, hurrying on, he sprang into the boat.

“ Every one down, and motionless !” cried Richard of Woodville, without exchanging even a word with those who were most dear ; and, casting off the rope, he steered as well as the paddle would permit towards the bank. But, hurried rapidly forward down the stream, with scarcely any power of direction, he saw that the frail bark must pass the ruined bridge. It was a moment of terrible anxiety ; for the eddies showed that the foundations of the piers

were left beneath the waters. By impulse, the instinct of great peril, he guided the boat over the most violent gush of the stream, between two of the half-checked whirlpools; and she shot clear down, falling into another vortex below, which carried her completely round twice; and then, broken by the blade of the paddle, let her float away into the stream.

The whole band of the Count of St. Paul were running down by the side of the river; and, as the course of the skiff became more steady, Richard of Woodville turned his eyes towards them. They had got what seemed a rope in their hands; and, ever and anon, one of his own archers held it up, and made signs, as if he would have thrown it, had they been nearer.

“Some one be ready to catch the rope!” cried Woodville, “I cannot quit the steering;” and he guided the boat gently and gradually towards the shore. The young clerk sprang at once into the bow; the women sat still in breathless expectation. Sir John Grey advanced slowly and steadily to aid the youth;

and when, at the distance of a few yards, a band, formed of the sword-belts of the troop tightly tied together, was thrown on board, the young man and the old knight caught it, but were pulled down by the shock. Some of the others aided to hold it fast ; but, in spite of all Woodville's efforts, the boat swung round, struck the rocky shore violently, and began to fill.

There were now many to aid, however : one after another was supported to the land ; and Richard of Woodville, springing out the last, caught his sweet Mary to his heart, and blessed the God of all mercies for her preservation in that hour of peril.

As he did so, a faint and distant cry, and a rushing sound, different—very different, either from the roar of the stream or the growling of the thunder, caught the ear. All turned round towards the mill, and gazed.—It was gone !—a black mass floated on the tide, struck against the sunken piers of the fallen bridge, obstructed for a moment the torrent which instantly poured over it in a white cataract,

and then, broken into innumerable fragments, rushed past, darkening the red waters. Woodville ran to the brink, and gazed ; but no trace of the rash men who had chosen to remain appeared, and their bodies were not found for many days, when they floated to the shore far down the then subsided stream.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RECOMPENSE.

OH, what a moment it was when, after seeing the wreck of the mill drift by, Richard of Woodville again held Mary Grey to his heart ! He cared not who witnessed his emotions, he thought not of the crowd around, he thought not of her father's presence, or of the letter he had received on the preceding night. All he remembered, all he felt, was, that she was saved ; and the knowledge of the dreadful death that had just overtaken those who had perished by their own obstinacy, added to the joy of that overpowering feeling, notwithstanding the horror of their fate.

Bearing her rather than leading her, her lover brought Mary to the shelter of the trees ; for though the storm had somewhat abated, the

rain was still coming down heavily ; and there, while the tears poured fast from her beautiful eyes, one or two of the stout English archers, who had known her well at Dunbury, came quietly up and kissed her hand. The Count of St. Paul and his men stood looking on ; Sir John Grey gazed upon the lover and the lady with a silent smile : and they themselves spoke not for many minutes, so intense were the emotions of their hearts.

At length, however, after a few low words of explanation with the Count of St. Paul, the old knight advanced to Woodville's side and took his hand, saying, "What, not a word to me, Richard?"

The young knight put his hand to his brow, and gazed at Mary's father in surprise, so different seemed his tone from that of the letter he had received.

"The surprise of seeing you here, noble knight," he answered, in a confused manner ; "the joy of having been brought, as it were, by Heaven's own hand to save this dear lady, when I least expected to meet with

her,—all confounds me and takes away my words.”

“Surprise at seeing us!” repeated Sir John Grey, in a tone of astonishment. “When you least expected to meet with her!—Have you not received my letter by the post of the Count of Charolois?”

“One letter, sir knight, I did receive,” replied Woodville; “but it gave me no thought that I should see you here.”

The knight gazed at him for an instant with a look that seemed expressive of doubt as well as wonder. “Here is some mistake,” he said. “I trust, my young friend, this catastrophe has not shaken your brain. But one letter have I written, and therein I besought you to meet us at Givet or at Dinant.”

Richard of Woodville replied not, but beckoned to his page; and when the boy hurried up, took from him the gibecière which hung over his shoulder. With a hand hasty and agitated, he unfastened the three buttons and loops which closed it, and drew forth a paper, which in silence he placed in the hands of Sir John Grey.

The knight took it, gazed on the superscription, examined the seal, and then turned to the contents; but instantly exclaimed as he read, "This is not mine! This is a fraud! I never wrote these words. The outside is from my hand; the seal, too, is seemingly my own; but not one of these harsh terms did I indite."

"Then I thank God!" replied Richard of Woodville, grasping his hand eagerly. "Nay, more, I thank the man who wrote it, though it may seem strange, noble knight. But perchance, had it not been for this and the despair it brought with it, I might have listened to the kind friends who would fain have persuaded me not to risk my life, or, as they thought, to lose it, for men who were strangers to me."

"What, then," cried Mary, rising from the ground on which she had been seated, "did you not recognise us?"

"I knew not when I left the shore," replied Richard of Woodville, "that there was one being on that miserable islet, whom I had

ever beheld before. — I merit no guerdon, dear one, for saving you, for I knew not what I did."

"A thousand and a thousand thanks, Richard," she answered, laying her fair hand upon his arm; "and far more thanks do I give you, than if you had perilled more to save me knowingly; for by such a deed, done for a mere stranger, you show my father that his child has not spoken of you falsely."

"Nay, dear Mary, I doubt it not," replied Sir John Grey; "by calumny and malice, all men may be for a time misled; but henceforth, my child, no one shall do him better justice than myself. You judged from acts that you had often seen and known; I had none such to judge by. But should he need defence hereafter, let him appeal to me.—This must seem strange to you, my good Lord," he continued, turning to the Count of St. Paul; "but we will explain it all hereafter. All, at least, that we can explain—for here is something that we must enquire into as best we may. This letter has been forged for some base end;

but by whom or for what, remains a mystery, though perhaps we may all suspect."

"Every thing else seems clear enough," said the Count with a smile, "though I understand but half you have said, yet I guess well, here has been love, and, as so often happens, with love, love's traverses; and, in the end, the happy meed which attends due knightly service to a fair lady. As soon as my noble cousin appears, though by my faith he is somewhat long in coming—"

"I see his train, my Lord, or I am blind," said the old man-at-arms, called Carloman. "Do you not perceive a long black line winding on there down from the hills, near a league distant, like a lean serpent?"

"No very sweet comparison for a Prince's train," exclaimed the Count of St. Paul laughing; "but faith, I see it not. Ah—yes—I catch it now. 'Tis he, 'tis doubtless he. Then when he comes, sir knight, we will on to Charleville, where, having dried our dripping clothes, we will tell the tale of this day's adventure over a pleasant meal: and will en-

quire how this deceit has taken place. Has yon young novice nought to do with it?" he continued, dropping his voice; "he holds aloof, and though he seems to murmur something to his rosary from time to time, yet, good faith, I put but small trust in the honesty of mumbling friars."

"No, no," replied Mary Grey with a smile, "I will answer for him."

"Ah, ha!" cried the Count laughing loud, with the rude jocularitv of the day, "look to your lady, Sir Richard, or you may lose her yet. She answers for the honesty of a monk! By my fay, sweet lady, I would rather beard John the Bold in his house at Dijon, than do so rash a thing."

"But I can answer for him, too," replied Sir John Grey gravely; "for, though he be now my clerk, he was not with me there, and so had no occasion to deceive me, even had he been disposed. But yonder, assuredly comes the Count. I can see banners and pennons through the dim shower; but how we are to journey on with you to Charleville I hardly

know, my good Lord ; for all but what we have brought in our pouches—horses and clothes and arms and many a trinket have gone down in that poor mill.”

“ I saw no horses in the stream,” said Woodville.

“ They were in the court on the other side,” replied one of Sir John Grey’s men ; “ and it had a stone wall. The water was up to the girths when we got into the second story, and I saw my poor beast with bended head and open nostrils, snuffing the tide as it rose whirling round him. He soon drowned, I fear.”

“ ’Tis but a league to Charleville, or not much more,” said the Count answering the English Knight ; “ we will dismount some of our men, and make a litter for the lady and her maidens. Hark ye, Peterkin, ride back like light to the castle. In the Florence chamber, you will find store of your lady’s gear. My good wife is not here, sir knight ; but she has left much of her apparel behind, which, though she be somewhat fatter than this fair dame, God wot, will serve to clothe her

for the nonce. Ride away fast, boy; bring it to Charleville, and lose no time.—Now to build a litter. Lances may serve for more purposes than one; and green boughs be curtains as well as canopies. Quick, my men, quick; let us see if ye be dexterous at such trades.”

In about half an hour, an advanced party of the Count of Charolois' band approached the bank of the river; but it was still so swollen, that though the Count of St. Paul and the two English Knights went down as far as they could, and the rain by this time had well nigh ceased, the distance across, and the roaring of the stream, prevented their voices from being heard at the other side. While they were still striving to make the men comprehend that the bridge had been carried away, and that they must ride farther down the river, the young Count himself and the Lord of Croy, with a number of other knights and noblemen appeared; and by signs, as words were vain, the Lord of St. Paul explained his meaning to them. He himself with his own party

waited for about a quarter of an hour longer, till the hasty litter was prepared for Mary Grey ; and then, with some on foot, and some on horseback, they moved on towards the point of rendezvous at Charleville.

It was a happy evening that which they passed in Charleville, for there is nought which so heightens the zest of pleasure as remembered pain ; nought that so brightens the sense of security, as danger past. All was bustle and confusion in the little town, which was not then fortified ; every inn was full, every house was occupied ; but it was willing bustle and gay confusion. From one hostel to another, parties were going every moment, and the door of that at which the young Count of Charolois had taken up his quarters, was besieged both by the townspeople, and his own friends and followers. The tale of the swollen torrent, and the mill swept away, was told to the noble Prince by the Lord of St. Paul and Sir John Grey ; and when Richard of Woodville, who had lingered a little with Mary Grey, appeared, the Count grasped his hand with a generous

warmth, which was very winning in one so high, calling him frequently his friend ; and then turning to Sir John Grey, he demanded, "Said I not, noble knight, of what stuff he was made ?"

"You did him but justice, my good Lord," replied the knight ; "and I do him full justice now. Well has he won his lady's hand, and he shall have it."

"Come !" cried the Prince, starting up ; "I will go offer her my homage, too.—But why should we not see the wedding ere we part, Sir John ?"

"Nay, nay, my Lord," answered the English knight ; "I have grown proud with restored prosperity ; and my child must go to the altar in my own land, and with my own old followers round me."

Oh, slow old age, how tardy is it to yield to the eager haste of youth ! But Sir John Grey added words still less pleasant to the ear of Richard of Woodville. "When I return from the Court of the Emperor, my noble Prince," he continued, "I speed back at once to West-

minster. I trust that your expedition will then be over; and Sir Richard here may follow me with all speed. Once there, I will not make him wait."

Such was the first intimation Woodville had received of the course that lay before him and Sir John Grey; for the previous moments had passed in words of tenderness with her he loved, and in long, but not uninteresting, explanations with her father. He had hoped that their paths would lie together; and, without enquiring what motive should carry Sir John Grey with the Count of Charolois into the Duchy of Burgundy, he had arrived at the conclusion, that the knight's steps were bent thither as well as his own. It was a bitter disappointment, for imagination in such cases is ever the handmaid of hope; and Richard of Woodville had fancied that, in the course of the long expedition before them, many an opportunity must occur for urging upon Sir John Grey his petition for Mary's hand. Now, however, they were again about to be separated, with wide lands between them, and with the certainty

of months, perhaps years, elapsing ere they met again.

It is strange, it is very strange and scarcely to be accounted for, that people advanced in life, and experienced in the uncertainty of all life's things, seem to have a confidence in the future which the young do not possess. They delay, they put off without fear or apprehension; they calculate as if with certainty upon the time to come; while eager youth, on the contrary, at the very name of procrastination conjures up every difficulty and obstacle, every change and chance, not alone within the range of probability, but within the reach of fate. Perhaps it is, that the old have acquired a juster appreciation of all mortal joy; perhaps it is, that the keen edge of anticipation being dulled in themselves, they cannot comprehend the impatience of others; that, knowing how little any earthly gratification is really worth, they think it but a small matter, not meriting much thought, whether the hand of the future snatches the desired object from us or not, whether the butterfly, enjoy-

ment, be caught by the boy that chases it, or escape.

So it is, however: Sir John Grey seemed not even to understand or to perceive the pain he was inflicting upon the lover; and, as Woodville knew that it would be of no use to argue, he made up his mind to enjoy the present as much as might be, and, then with Mary's love for his guidance and encouragement, to seek honour and advancement in the fields before him.

After a few more words he accompanied the Count of Charolois, with the principal nobles of his train and Sir John Grey, to the hostel where the English knight had taken up his abode; but, as they entered, the eyes of Richard of Woodville fell upon the figure of a poor disconsolate looking boy, who stood near, with his arms folded on his chest, and his eyes bent down upon the ground, without being once lifted to the gay and glittering group that was passing in; and pointing him out to the Lord of St. Paul, the young knight said, "He was one of those saved from the mill, my Lord; and,

if I mistake not, he is of kin to some of the men who perished."

"Come hither, boy," said the Constable ;
"who art thou?"

"I am Edmé Mark, my Lord," replied the boy, looking up with tearful eyes ; "and all my friends are dead."

"Then are you the miller's son?" enquired the Lord of St. Paul.

"No, sir, his nephew," the boy answered in the jargon of his country.

"Faith, then, we must do something for you," rejoined the nobleman. "Will you ride with me and be my *coustelier*, or with that knight?"

"I would rather go with him," cried the boy, pointing to the young Englishman, "for he saved my life."

"Well, then, take him with you, Sir Richard," said the Lord of St. Paul. "You want to swell your band."

"Good faith, I have need, my Lord," answered Richard of Woodville ; "for the three men I left behind me when I came from Ghent, have never rejoined me."

“I saw some Englishmen with the Count’s train in the court of his hostel,” replied the Lord of St. Paul. “I knew them by their flat cuirasses, and their long arrows.”

“Ah, I marked them not,” answered Richard of Woodville; “but I will go and see.—Come hither with me, boy,” he continued; and, followed by the lad, he retrod his steps in haste to the inn where he had found the Count. In the court he saw nothing but Flemings and Burgundians; but in the stables, tending their horses, he found the three men whom he sought, and who now informed him, in the brief and scanty words of the English peasant, that they had escorted Ella Brune to Bruges, and there had left her, she having assured them that she was safe, and required their protection no farther. They had then immediately returned to Ghent; for they had never received the written order which their leader had sent to them; and, having obtained speech of the Count of Charolois, had accompanied him on his expedition, according to his commands, Richard of Woodville mused over this intelligence for

some minutes ; and then, after placing the boy Edmé in their hands, with orders to take care of him, he hurried back to her he loved.

For three or four days Sir John Grey took advantage of the escort of the Count of Charolois, on his journey towards the Imperial Court, purchasing horses and clothing where he could find them, to supply the place of those lost in the torrent. During that time, as may be supposed, Richard of Woodville was constantly by Mary's side, and it passed happily to both : nor did any incident occur worthy of record here, till they reached the town of Bar, where they were destined to part. The last conversation that took place between them ere they separated, was in regard to Ella Brune, led on by a half jesting question addressed to Mary by her lover, if she had really never felt jealousy or doubt when so many suspected.

“ Neither, Richard,” she answered. “ I could not suspect you ; and besides, I had myself told that poor girl, that I would never doubt or be jealous ; and I blamed you to her,

Richard, for not taking her, when first she sought to go."

"She seems to have the gift of winning confidence, my Mary," replied the young knight; "and a blessed gift it is."

"'Tis only gained by deserving it, Richard, and not always then," answered Mary Markham: "but one cannot well doubt her, either. When one sees a clear stream flowing on abundantly, we judge that the source is pure; and all her thoughts gush so limpid from the heart, we cannot doubt that heart to be unpolluted too."

"Would that we knew where she is, my Mary," said Richard of Woodville, thoughtfully. "I fear for her much, left in the same land with that base villain, who has so persecuted her, and of whose dark wiles there seems no end."

"She is safe, she is safe," exclaimed the lady; "I have heard of her since she departed. She is safe, and with friends able and willing to protect her, I know; but I fear, indeed, that what you say is true in regard to that

traitor, Simeon of Roydon. Do you doubt, Richard, that this forged letter from my father, was some contrivance of his ?”

“And yet,” answered Woodville, “we can by no means trace it to him. The messenger declares he brought the packet as he received it. The Count says he placed your father’s and his own together, and gave them to his page, who, in turn, vows he carried them straight to the messenger.”

“It is strange indeed,” said Mary; “but as to poor Ella she is safe; and wherever I am I will do my best to befriend her, Richard.”

They were alone; and he pressed her to his heart with feelings far brighter, far tenderer than mere passion; for beauty is but the expression of excellence; and when we find the substance, oh, how much more deeply we love it than the picture! The fairest features that ever were chiselled by the hand of nature, the sweetest form that ever woke wild emotions in the breast, could never have produced in the heart of Richard of Woodville, the sensations that he then felt towards Mary Grey.

Ere long they parted; and while she with her father wended on towards the Court of the Emperor—Sir John Grey, acting as a sort of precursor to the more splendid embassy soon after sent by Henry V.—the young knight followed the Count of Charolois to Dijon and Besançon, and aided to raise that force with which John the Bold soon after took the field against the rival faction of Armagnac, then all-powerful in the Court of France.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DISAPPOINTMENT.

Months had passed. The clang of trumpets and timbrels had sounded beneath the walls of Paris, from morning till well nigh vespers ; and the clear blue country sky was glowing with the last rays of the sun before he set. But, still the redoubted chivalry of Burgundy, with glittering arms and royal pageantry, stood upon the frosty ground before the gates, the towers of which were crowded with armed men who dared not issue forth to meet their enemies in the field, less because they doubted their own strength—for they were treble at least in number — than because they knew that, within that city, the popular heart beat high to take part with the bold Duke John, “the people’s friend.”

Faults he had many ; crimes of a dark die he had committed ; the blood of the Duke of Orleans was fresh upon his hand ; but his Princely generosity, his daring courage, and more than all, his love of the Commons, a body grown everywhere already into terrible importance, wiped out all stains in the eyes of the citizens of Paris ; and they longed to build up once more the fabric of his power on the ruin of those proud nobles, who, still in their attachment to pure feudal institutions, looked upon the craftsman and the merchant, as little better than half emancipated serfs.

Long ere this period, the power of the middle classes had grown into an engine which might be guided, but could not be resisted without danger. In England, its influence had first been recognised by the great De Montford, who had wisely attempted to direct its young energies in a just and beneficial course ; for which the land we live in—nay, perhaps the world—owes him still a deep debt of gratitude. Influenced by the character of the nation, its progress in this country was marked by slow but

steady increase of strength ; and it went on gaining fresh vigour, more from the natural result of contests between the various institutions which it was destined to supersede, than from its own efforts to extend its sphere. Rebellious nobles looked to it for aid ; Kings courted its support ; usurpers submitted more or less their claims to its approval ; and from each and all it obtained concessions. Seldom meeting any severe check—till in long after years, a fatal effort was made to raise an embankment against it, when it burst in a deluge over every obstacle—during the early period of our history it diffused itself calmly, more like the quiet overflowing of the fertilizing rill, than the rush and destructive outbreak of a pent-up torrent. But in France such was not the case, and for ages the struggle to resist it went on ; while, partaking of the fierce but desultory and ungoverned activity of the people, it sometimes burst forth, sometimes was driven back, till at length its hour came, and it swept all before it, washing away the seeds of good and evil alike, and leaving behind a new soil for the

plough, difficult to labour, and fertile of thorns as well as verdure.

In these middle ages of which I write, few were wise enough to see the existence, and comprehend the inevitable course, of the great latent principle which was destined to take the place of every other. The fact—the truth—that all power is from the people, and that wisdom is the helm which must guide it, was a discovery of after times ; and was, moreover, so repugnant to the spirit of the feudal system—that strange, but great ideal—that in the land where feudal institutions were most perfect, the men who owed them all, never dreamed that they could be swept away by the seemingly weak and homely influences which they were accustomed to use at their will : even as our ancestors, not many years ago, little imagined that the vapour which rose from the simmering kettle of the peasant or the mechanic, would one day waft navies through the ocean, and reduce space to nothing.

If there were any in that land of France who, without a foresight of what was to be,

merely owned the existence of a great popular power, it was but to use it for their own purposes, ever prepared to check it the moment it had served their object. Some, indeed, in habits of mind and disposition were of a character to win its aid by demeanour and conduct, and such was preeminently John the Bold. Strange too, to say, that very chivalrous spirit which characterised so many of his actions, won to his side a great body of the nobles without alienating the middle and the lower classes ; but it was, that he was more the knight than the feudal baron ; more the sovereign than the great lord. It must never be forgotten in viewing the history of those times, that the original object of the institution of chivalry, was to correct the evils of the feudal system ; to strike the rod from the hand of the oppressor, to defend the defenceless, and to right the wronged ; and had chivalry remained in its purity, it might have averted long the downfall of the system with which it was linked. The people loved the true knight as much as they hated the feudal lord ; and long after the decay

of the order, even the affectation of its higher qualities both won regard from the lower classes, and excited the admiration of all those above them, who retained any sparks of the spirit which once animated it.

Thus, the Duke of Burgundy, though surrounded by many of the highest in the land, and possessed of their affection in an extraordinary degree, was popular with the trader in his shop, and the peasant in his cot. Town after town had opened its gates to him as he advanced ; and now he stood before the gates of Paris, trusting to the citizens to rise and give him admission. But the love with which he was regarded by the people was as well known to others as to himself, and all chance of a demonstration in his favour had been guarded against with the most scrupulous care. The Dauphin Duke of Aquitaine, whether willingly or unwillingly it is difficult to say, marched through the streets of the capital surrounded by the family of Orleans, and the partizans of Armagnac, and followed by no less than eleven thousand men-at-arms, exhort-

ing the populace in every quarter, by the voice of a herald, to remain tranquil, and resist the suggestions of the agents of the Burgundian faction: "and thus," says one of the historians of the day, "they provided so well for the guard of the town, that no inconvenience occurred."

The walls and gates were covered with soldiery; the heralds and messengers of the Duke were not suffered to approach, though their words were peaceful; and some of the Burgundian nobles who ventured too near, in order to speak with those whom they thought personally friendly, were driven back by arrows and quarrels. Even the kings of arms were threatened with death if they approached within bow-shot; and, though one was found bold enough to fix the letters of which he was the bearer, on a lance before the gate of St. Anthony, and others contrived to obtain secret admission into the town, to distribute the Duke's proclamation amongst the people, and even affix copies to the gates of the churches and palaces, so strict was watch kept upon the citizens, that a rising was impossible.

Disappointed and angry, but with apparent scorn, the Duke, who had not sufficient forces to render an attack upon the walls successful, even if it had been politic to make it, withdrew to St. Denis at nightfall; and the menacing array disappeared from before Paris, like a pageant that had passed away. The leaders of the troops of Burgundy, separated from those of Flanders and Artois, took up their abode where they had been quartered in the morning, at the hostel called "the Lance," nearly opposite to the abbey; and, while the Duke remained for several hours closeted with some of his oldest councillors, the Lord of Croy drew Richard of Woodville apart from the rest, and whispered that he wished to speak with him alone in his chamber.

The young knight followed him at once; for the intimacy which had arisen between them at Lille, and on the road to Ghent, had ripened into friendship during their long expedition into Burgundy; and without preface, the noble Burgundian exclaimed, as soon as the door was closed, "This will not go forward, Woodville.

The Duke, bold as he is, will not strike a stroke against the king's capital, with the king therein. I see it well; and, with this enterprise, passes away my hope of delivering my poor boy John, who lies, as you know, a prisoner at Montl'herry, unless I can take some counsel for his aid."

"Nay, my good Lord," replied Richard with a smile; "doubtless you have taken counsel already, and all I can say is, that if I can aid you, my hand is ready. Can you not march to Montl'herry, and deliver him? The country is clear of men, for every one capable of bearing arms for the enemy, has been gathered into Paris."

"I have thought of it, Woodville," replied the Lord of Croy; "but a large body moving across the country would soon call the foe forth in greater numbers; and, moreover, my lord, the Duke could ill spare so many men as your band and mine would carry off. But I would give my land of Nuranville to any one who would lead a small party to Montl'herry, and set free the boy, as I have planned it."

“ Ah, my Lord, I thought your scheme was fixed,” said the young knight, laughing at the circuitous manner in which his friend had announced his wishes. “ Let me know what it is, and as I said before, if I can succour your son, I am ready.”

“ To say truth, it is the boy’s own device,” replied the Burgundian ; “ he has made a friend of the chaplain in the castle, where they hold him ; and by this good man’s hands, I receive letters from him. He tells me that if a small body of resolute gentlemen, not well known to be of our party, could enter the town and keep themselves quiet therein for one day, he could find means to go forth to mass and escape under their escort. I have chosen out twenty of my surest men ; but, as it was needful that they should pass for followers of the Duke of Orleans, I could not send any one to command them who had gained much renown in France, lest he should be known. Thus they want a leader ; and where can I find one of sufficient experience, and yet not likely to be recognised, if you refuse me ? ”

“That will I not, my Lord,” replied Richard of Woodville; “but I must have the Duke’s leave. Who are the men to go with me? I know most of those under your banner.”

“Lamont de Launoy,” replied the Burgundian, “Villemont de Montebard, whom you know well; and Jean Roussel are amongst them. Then, as for the Duke’s leave, that is already gained; for I spoke to him as we marched back to-night; and he himself suggested that you should lead the party, because you speak the French tongue well, and yet your face is unknown in France.”

“A work of honour and of friendship shall never find me behind, my Lord,” replied the young knight; “and I will be ready to mount an hour before daylight; but I must have full command, my Lord. Some of your men are turbulent; so school them well to obey; and, in the mean time, I will despatch a letter or two, for good and evil news have reached me here together.”

“The good from your fair lady, I can guess,” said the Lord of Croy, “for I have heard to-

day of her father's journey back through Ghent towards England. The evil is not without remedy, I trust ? ”

“ No, I trust not,” replied Woodville ; “ it comes from a dear friend of mine, Sir Henry Dacre, who writes word that some one has done me harm in the King's opinion, and speaks of letters sent from his Highness long ago, requiring my return, surely delivered, and yet unnoticed, and unanswered. Now, no such letters ever reached my hand ; nor can I dream who could have power to wrong me with King Henry ; for the only one inclined to do so, is a banished man.”

“ Three times I have remarked a stranger amongst your people, since we were at Charleville,” answered the Lord of Croy ; “ once it was at Besançon, once at Toul, and the other day again at Compiègne. His face is unknown to me, and yet he was talking gaily with your band, as if he were one of them ; but he staid not long ; for this last time, I saw him as I passed through the court of the inn, and he was gone when I returned.”

“It shall be enquired into,” replied Richard of Woodville; “but now I must to these letters, my good Lord; and to-morrow, an hour ere daybreak, I will be in the saddle. Pray God give us success, and that I may restore your son to your arms.”

The Lord of Croy thanked him as such prompt kindness might well merit, and took his leave; but, as soon as he was gone, Richard of Woodville leaned his head upon his hand in thought, and with a somewhat dark and gloomy brow remained in meditation for several minutes.

“What is it makes me so sad?” he asked himself; “it cannot be this empty piece of malice, from some unworthy fool, whose calumnies I can sweep away in a moment, and whose contrivances I can frustrate by a word of plain truth. The King does not believe that I would contemn his commands—in his heart, he does not, I am sure?—Yet I feel as if some great misfortune hung upon the wings of the coming hours! Perchance, I may fall in this very enterprise—Who can

tell?—Many a man finds his fate in some petty skirmish, who has passed through stricken fields unwounded. The lion-hearted Richard himself brought his life safe from Palestine, and a thousand glorious fields—from dangers of all kinds, sufferings, and imprisonment, to lose it before the walls of a pitiful castle scarce bigger than a cottage. Well, what is to be, will be ; but I must provide against any event ;” and, calling some of his men to speak with him, he told them that he was about to be absent for three days, taking no one with him but his page. He then gave them directions, in case of any mischance befalling him, either to find their way back to England, or to continue to serve with the band of the Lord of Croy ; but, at all events, unless specially summoned by the King of England, not to quit the Duke as long as he remained in the field. This done, he turned to his letters, and remained writing till a late hour of the night.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DISASTER.

IN the square of the pretty town of Montl'herry, nearly opposite the church, and under the domineering walls of the château, were two hostels, or inns, the one called the Wheat-sheaf, and the other the Bunch of Grapes; for, in those days, as in the present time, the houses of public reception were not only more numerous in France than in any country in the world, but were ornamented with signs taken from almost every object under the sun, and from a great many that the sun never shone upon. As every one knows, the little town of Montl'herry is situated on a high isolated and picturesque hill; and down one of the streets running from the *Place* or square, could at that time be seen the rich plain stretching out by

Longpont to Plessis-Saint Père, with the numerous roads which cross it in different directions towards Epinay, Ville-aux-bois, and other small towns, as well as the highway towards Paris.

Before these two inns on the morning of a cold but clear day, towards the end of February, were collected some twenty men-at-arms, who had been lodging there from the night before, and who seemed now preparing to ride away upon their farther journey, after the morning meal, then called dinner, should have been discussed. In the meantime, they were undergoing a sort of inspection from their leader, a young man of a tall and powerful frame, and a handsome and engaging countenance, bronzed with the sun and marked with a scar upon his brow. Though he moved easily and gracefully under the weight, he was covered with complete armour from the neck to the heels, which displayed the spurs of knighthood. His casque lay upon the bench at the door of the Wheat-sheaf, and leaning negligently against the wall of the inn appeared the lances of the men-at-arms who each stood beside his horse, while

the knight passed from one to another, making some observation to each, sometimes in a tone of reproof, sometimes in words of praise. The host of one of the inns stood before his door observing their proceedings, and some half-a-dozen little boys were spending their idleness in gazing at the glittering soldiery.

Towering above, appeared the ancient castle held by the partizans of the Orleans or Armagnac faction ; and when it is remembered that these below were soldiers of the House of Burgundy, and that the young knight at their head was Richard of Woodville, it must be acknowledged that this was a somewhat bold stratagem thus to parade a body of hostile troops in the midst of an enemy's town. The young leader, however, well knew that nothing but the assumption of perfect ease and security could escape suspicion, and confirm the tale which had been told of his band being a party of the men of Orleans.

The gate of the castle he could not see ; but from time to time as he passed from one man

to another, he looked round to the door of the church, and presently as the clock struck, he held up his fingers, saying, "What hour is that?" and then as he counted, he turned somewhat sharply to the host, exclaiming, "By the Lord, you have kept us so late for our dinner, that we shall have time to take none. Bring the men out some wine. Quick, my men, quick. On with your bacinets!"

The host assured him that the meal would be served in a minute; but the knight replied, "A minute!" Did you not tell me so half-an-hour ago? Quick, bring out the wine, or we shall be obliged to go without that. What do you think our Lord will say, if we wait for your minutes?" and while the host retired to bring the wine, the men assumed their casques, and Richard of Woodville whispered to one who seemed superior to the rest—"He is in the church. I saw him go in with the priest."

"So did I," replied the other; "but he has got a guard with him."

"We must not mind that," replied Wood-

ville ; “ we shall have some start of them ; for they will all be at dinner in the castle — no horses saddled, no armour buckled on. Mount, my men, mount. You can drink in the stirrups. Now, boy, give me my casque.”

The page ran and brought the bacinet ; the host returned with the wine ; and each man drank a deep draught and handed the cup and tankard to his neighbour. Richard of Woodville then sprang into his saddle, his page mounted, and taking the bridle of a spare horse, which was then very generally led after the commander of a party, followed his lord, as, with his lance in his hand, he headed his little troop, and took his way across the Place, saying aloud as he rode slowly forward, “ One prayer to our lady, and I am with you.”

The host gazed after them to the door of the church, but thought it nothing extraordinary, that a young knight should follow so common and laudable a custom as beginning a journey with a petition for protection. When, therefore, Richard of Woodville dismounted with two of his men, and entered the sacred build-

ing, he turned himself into his own house again, and applied himself to other affairs. In the meanwhile the knight strode up the nave, looking around him as he went, while his two companions followed close behind.

Some half dozen women, principally of the lower orders, were the only persons at first visible ; but in one of the small chapels, from which the sound of a voice singing mass was heard, they soon after perceived a young gentleman, habited in the garb of peace, kneeling at a little distance from the altar, before which stood a priest in robes, performing the functions of his office.

“ That is he,” whispered one of the Burgundians to Richard of Woodville, and advancing straight to the young Lord of Croy, the knight took him by the arm, saying, in a low tone, “ You are wanted, John of Croy.—Where is the guard who was with you ?”

“ Somewhere in the church, speaking with a woman who was to meet him here,” said the young lord, rising. “ Perhaps we may get out without his seeing us.”

“Never mind if he do,” said Richard of Woodville; “we shall be far on the way before they are in the saddle;” and hurrying on with the young Lord of Croy, he reached the door of the church without interruption. The priest could not but see the whole of their proceedings, but he took no notice, going on with the service devoutly.

The clang of the step of armed men, however, had caught another ear; and just as the young Lord of Croy was passing out, a voice was heard exclaiming, “Whither are you going, young sir?”

Richard of Woodville turned his head and replied, “Home!” and then issuing forth, closed the door, and thrust his dagger through the staple that confined the large heavy latch. The horse led by the page was close at hand; and John of Croy, with his deliverers, sprang into the saddle, and rode out of Montl’herry at full speed.*

* It is a strange omission on the part of the historians of the day, that in relating the escape of John of Croy, they have not mentioned the name of Richard of Woodville.

The precaution of the English knight in fastening the door, proved less serviceable than he had hoped, however; for as they passed down the street, he turned and saw the man who had been sent to guard the prisoner—having found exit by some other means—running as fast as he could go towards the castle; and when they reached the foot of the hill, the sound of a trumpet came, borne upon the breeze from above.

On, on, the little party hurried, however; and they had already gained so much ground, that every prospect of escape seemed before them. But unfortunately, no one was well acquainted with the road; Richard of Woodville and his company had found their way thither as best they could; and the young Lord of Croy, who was at the head of the band, while Woodville brought up the rear, turned into a wrong path in the wood near Longpont, so that some time was lost ere they got right again. They were just issuing forth on a road which leads to the left of Lonjumeau, when the sound of pursuit caught the ear; and at the same

moment the horse of the page stumbled and fell.

“Up, up boy!” cried Richard of Woodville, drawing in his rein, as he had nearly trodden the poor youth under his horse’s feet; and then adding to those before, “Ride on! ride on!” he stooped and held out his hand to the lad, who staggered up, confused and half stunned with the fall. Before the horse could be raised, and the youth mount, coming round the angle of the wood, by a shorter cut, appeared the pursuers from Montl’herry. The Burgundians had followed the order to ride on, which, had they been the young knight’s own band, they might, under the circumstances, have perchance disobeyed. Woodville gazed after them, turned his eyes towards the enemy—the foremost of whom was not more than a hundred yards distant—took one moment for consideration; and then, setting his lance in the rest, he spurred on towards the enemy. The man met him in full career; but, not prepared for such a sudden encounter, was unhorsed in a moment, and the two or three who followed, pulled in

the rein. The young knight's object was gained ; their pursuit was checked ; and the advantage of even a few minutes was everything for the young Lord of Croy.

"Surrender, knight, surrender !" cried the voice of one of the opposite party ; but Woodville though he well knew that such must be the result at last, resolved to struggle for a farther delay ; and exclaiming, " What ! to half-a-dozen squires ? Never ! never !" he reined back his horse, as if to take ground for a fresh career, and again charged his lance which had remained unsplintered, while his page rode up behind, asking, " May I fight too, noble sir ?"

"No boy, no ! Keep back !" cried the knight ; and at the same moment a more numerous party appeared to the support of the Armagnacs, led by a baron's banner. They bore down straight towards him, some one still calling upon him to surrender ; and, seeing that farther resistance was vain, Woodville raised his lance and took off his gauntlet as a sign that he yielded.

"After them, like lightning !" cried the voice

of a gentleman in a suit of richly ornamented steel. "A knight is a good exchange for a squire; but we must not let the other escape. —Now, fair sir, do you yield rescue or no rescue?"

"I do," answered the young knight; "there is my glove, and I give you my faith."

"Pray let us see your face," continued the nobleman raising his own vizor, while the greater part of his troop rode on after the young Lord of Croy. Richard of Woodville followed his example; but neither was known to the other, though as it afterwards proved they had once met before.

"May I ask you name, fair sir?" demanded the captor, in the courteous tone then used between adversaries.

"Richard of Woodville," replied the young knight; and a smile instantly came upon the countenance of the other, who replied, "A follower of Burgundy, or I mistake. I regret I was not up sooner, good knight; for if the heralds gave me the name truly, I owe you a fall. When last we met, I was neither horsed

nor armed for combat properly. The chance might have been different this time."

"Perhaps it might, my Lord the Count," answered Woodville; "fortune is one man's to-day, another's to-morrow. Mine is the turn of ill luck, else had I not been here a prisoner."

"I bear no malice, sir," rejoined the Lord of Vaudemont; "but if you please, we will ride back to Montl'herry;" and following the invitation, which was now a command, the young knight accompanied his captor, saying to himself, "I felt that this enterprise would end ill, for me at least."

He knew not how far the evil was to extend.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CAPTIVITY.

OH, the long and tedious hours of imprisonment ! how they weigh down the stoutest heart ! How soul and mind seem fettered as well as body ; and how the chain grows heavier every hour we wear it ! Days and weeks passed by ; weeks and months flew away ; and, strictly confined to one small chamber in the castle of Montl'herry, Richard of Woodville remained a prisoner.

The Count of Vaudemont, courteous in words, showed himself ought but courteous in deeds. Every tone had been knightly and generous while he staid in the château ; but no results had followed. He would never fix the ransom of his captive ; he would never hold out any prospect of liberty ; and ere long

he departed for Paris, leaving Woodville in the hands of the Châtelain of the place, who, severely blamed for the escape of the young Lord of Croy, revenged himself upon him, by whose aid it had been accomplished. To that one little room, high up in the château, was Woodville restricted; no exercise was permitted to him, but the pacing up and down of its narrow limits: no relaxation but to sing snatches of the old ballads of which he was so fond, or to gaze from under the pointed arch of the window over the changing scene below. No one was permitted to see him but his own page, who had been captured with him, and one of the soldiers of the castle; no book existed within the walls; and materials for writing, purchased with difficulty in the town, were only granted him in order to write to the Lord of Vaudemont concerning his ransom.

At first he remonstrated mildly; but when no other answer arrived, but that the Count would think of it, he took another tone, reproached him for his want of courtesy, and reminded him, that though he had surrendered rescue or no

rescue, the refusal of reasonable ransom, justified him in making his escape whenever the opportunity might occur.

The Count's reply consisted of but four words, "Escape if you can," and from that hour the guard kept upon him, became more strict than before. The weary hours dragged heavily on. Summer succeeded to spring, and autumn to summer, without anything occurring to cheer the lonely vacancy of his captivity, but an occasional rumour, brought by the page or the soldier who acted as jailer, either of the great events which were then agitating Europe, or of efforts made for his own liberation. The reports, however, were all vague and uncertain. He heard of war between France and Burgundy, but could with difficulty obtain any means of judging which party had gained the ascendancy. Then he heard of a new peace, as hollow as those which had preceded it; and with that intelligence came the tidings, which the page gained from the soldiers of the garrison, that a large ransom had been offered for him; but whether by the Duke of Burgundy himself, or the Lord

of Croy, he could not correctly ascertain. Next came a rumour of dissensions between France and England, and of a probable war; but none of the particulars could be learnt, except that the demands of Henry V. were in the opinion of the Frenchmen extravagant, and that the greater part of the nation looked forward with delight to an opportunity of wiping away the disgrace of Cressy and Poitiers, and blotting out for ever the treaty of Bretigny.

Oh, what would he have given for his liberty then! All his aspirations for glory and renown, all his hopes of winning praise and advancement, all the dreams of young ambition, all the bright imaginations of love, rose up before him as memories of the dead. Those prison walls were their cold sepulchre, that solitary chamber the tomb of all the energies within him. He had well nigh become frantic with disappointment; but he struggled successfully with the despair of his own thoughts, as every man of a really powerful mind will do. No one can obtain full mastery of the minds of others, without having full mastery of his

own. He would not suffer his fancy to dwell upon sad things ; he strove to create for himself objects of interest ; and from the arched window he made himself acquainted as a friend with every object in the wide-spread scene beneath his eyes. Every church spire, every castle tower, every belt of wood, every stream and every road, every hamlet and every house, for miles around, were descried and marked as if he had been mapping the country in his own mind. But it was only that he was seeking for objects of interest ; and he found them ; and variety too, he found ; for every hour and every season brought its change. The varying shadows as day rose or declined ; the different hues of summer and of winter, of autumn and of spring ; the changeful aspect of the April day ; the frowning sublimity of the thunder-storm ; the cold, stern, desolate gloom of the wintry air, all gave food to nourish fancy with, and from each he extracted thought and occupation.

He had withal, one grand support and consolation : the best after the voice of religion, a conscience clear of offence. He could look back

upon the past and say, I have done well. There was no reproach within him for opportunities missed, advantages wasted, or ill deeds done ; and often and often, he thought of the first song that poor Ella Brune had sung him, and of that stanza in which she said,

“ In hours of pain and grief,
If such thou must endure,
Thy breast shall know relief
In honour tried and pure ;
For the true heart and kind,
Its recompence shall find ;
Shall win praise,
And golden days,
And live in many a tale.”

In the meanwhile, his treatment varied greatly at different times. Sometimes the Châtelain was harsh and severe, refusing him almost everything that was necessary to his comfort ; at others, with the caprice which is so common amongst rude and uncivilized people, he would seem joyous and good-humoured ; would visit his prisoner, talk with him, and send him dishes from his own table, permitting many a little alleviation of his grief, which on former occasions he denied. In one of these happier moods,

he allowed the page to buy his master a cithern, which proved one of the prisoner's greatest comforts and resources ; and not long after, in the summer of 1415, a still greater change of conduct took place towards him. His table became supplied with Princely liberality ; rich wines and dainty meats were daily set before him ; and the page was suffered to go at large about the town, to procure anything his master might require.

One day the boy returned somewhat heated with exercise, and moved with what seemed pleasurable feelings ; and looking round the room eagerly, he closed the door with care.

" You have tidings, Will," said the young knight, " and joyful tidings, too, or I am mistaken."

" I have better than tidings," replied the boy. " I have a letter. Read it quick, and then hide it. I will go out into the passage and watch, lest Joachim come up. He was lolling at the foot of the stairs."

Richard of Woodville took the letter from the boy eagerly, and read what was written

in the outer cover. The words were few, and in a hand he did not know. "Nothing has been left undone," the writer said, "to set you free. A baron's ransom has been offered for you and refused. The Duke of Burgundy required your liberation as one of the terms of peace, but could not obtain it. The Lord of Croy offered two prisoners of equal rank, and a ransom besides, but did not succeed. But fear not ; friends are gathering round you. Be prepared to depart at a moment's notice, and you shall be set free as others have been. The moment you are free, hasten to England ; for you have been belied."

Within this was a short letter from Mary Grey, full of tenderness and affection, with words and avowals which she might have scrupled to utter for any other purpose but the generous one of consoling and supporting him she loved, in sorrow and adversity. Beneath her name were written a few words from her father, expressive of more kindness, confidence, and regard than he had ever previously shown ; but he, too, spoke of the young knight's return to

England, as absolutely necessary for his own defence ; and he too alluded to the rumours against him, without stating what those rumours were.

If there was much to cheer, there was much to distress and grieve ; and Woodville paused for several minutes to think over the contents of these letters, and to consider what could be the nature of the calumnies referred to, believing that he had fully refuted the charge of having neglected to obey the King's command to return to England, before he set out on the expedition which had been attended by such an unfortunate result. At length the page looked in, to see if he had done ; and Woodville bidding him shut the door, enquired from whom he had received the letters.

“ It was from the young clerk, noble sir,” replied the boy, “ who was with Sir John Grey at Charleville. I saw a youth in a black gown wandering about the castle gates some days since ; and as I stood alone upon the drawbridge, about half an hour ago, he passed me again, and seeing that there was no one there, made

me a sign to follow. I walked after him into the church, and then he gave me the letter for you ; but bade me tell you to be upon your guard, for that there are enemies near as well as friends. To make sure that you were not deceived, he said, you were to put trust in no one who did not give you the word “ Mary Markham.”

“ Hark !” cried Woodville, rising and going to the window. “ There are trumpets sounding !”

“ I heard the Lord of Vaudemont was expected to-day,” replied the boy.

“ And there he is,” said Richard of Woodville, watching a body of horse coming up the hill. “ On my honour, if I have speech with him, he shall hear my full thoughts on his discourteous conduct.—But now, hie thee away, Will. Seek out this young clerk in the town, and ask if he can convey my answer back to the letters which he brought. I will find means to write if he can.”

“ Oh, I can find him,” replied the boy, “ for he told me where he lodged : in the house of a widow woman, named Chatain.”

“Away, then !” answered Woodville ; “let them not find you here.”

When he looked forth from the window again, the young knight could no longer perceive the body of horse he had seen advancing ; but the noises which rose up from the court of the castle below, the clang of arms, the gay tones of voices laughing and talking, the word of command, and the shout of the warder, showed him that the party had already arrived. About an hour passed without his hearing more ; but then came the sound of steps in the passage ; the door opened, and three gentlemen entered, of whom the first was the Count of Vaudemont. The next was a man several years younger ; and the third, a stout ill-favoured personage, of nearly fifty years of age. None of them were armed, except with a dagger, usually worn hanging from the waist ; and all were dressed in the extravagant style of the French court in that day, with every merely ornamental part of dress exaggerated till it became a monstrosity. Every colour, too, was the brightest that could be found ;

each contrasted with the other in the most vivid and inharmonious assortment, green and red, amber and blue, pink and yellow, so that each man looked like some gaudy eastern bird new feathered.

The Lord of Vaudemont was evidently in a light and merry mood, or, at least, affected it ; for he entered laughing, and at once held out his hand to his prisoner, as if a familiar friend.

Richard of Woodville, however, drew back, saying, “ Your pardon, my good Lord. I am a captive, for whom ransom has been refused. — You forget ! ”

“ Nay, I remember it well, sir knight,” replied the Count, laughing again ; “ and that you intend to escape. You have not succeeded yet, I see. However, let me set myself right with you on that head. ’Tis not I who refuse you ransom. ’Tis my Lord, the Duke of Aquitaine, who will not have you set free just yet, so that I risk my angels if you have wit enough to find your way out. His commands, however, are express, and I must obey. My Lord the Duke of Orleans, here present, will

witness for me, as well as my Lord of Armagnac, that I would far rather have your gold in my purse, where it is much needed, than your person in Montl'herry, where it could be well spared."

The young knight regarded the famous nobles, of whom he had heard so much, with no slight interest; and the Duke of Orleans, drawing a settle to the table, leaned his head upon his arm in a thoughtful attitude, saying, "It is quite true, sir; but perhaps that may be remedied ere long. If you be willing to renounce the cause of Burgundy, and agree to serve no more against the crown of France, the difficulty may be removed."

"I have no purpose, sir, to ride for that good Lord, the Duke, any more," answered Richard of Woodville; "I did but seek his Court to win honour and renown; but now I am called to England by many motives, so that I may well promise not to serve with him again; but if your proposal goes farther, and you would have me give my knightly word, not to fight for my Sovereign against any power

on earth where he may need my arm, I must at once say no. I am his vassal, and will do my duty according to my oath, whenever he shall call upon me. He is my Liege Lord ; and—”

“ There are some Englishmen, and not a few,” said the Count of Armagnac, in a harsh and grating tone of voice, “ who do not hold him to be such, but rather an usurper. Edmund, Earl of March, is your Liege Lord, young knight.”

“ He has never claimed that title, noble sir,” answered Richard of Woodville ; “ and indeed, has renounced it, by swearing allegiance himself to his great cousin.”

“ Compulsion, all compulsion,” said the Duke of Orleans ; “ we shall yet see him on the throne of England.”

“ I trust not, my Lord the Duke,” answered the English knight ; “ but if the plea of compulsion can, in your eyes, justify the breach of an oath, how could you expect me to keep a promise made, not to serve against this crown of France, here in a prison ? ”

“But why say you, that you trust not to see him on the throne?” asked the Count of Armagnac, evading the part of Woodville’s reply which he would have found difficult to answer. “He is surely a noble and courteous gentleman, full of high virtues.”

“Far inferior in all to his royal cousin,” answered the knight; “but it is not on that account alone I say so, but for many reasons. We Englishmen believe that our crown is held by somewhat different rights from yours of France. At the coronations of our kings, we by our free voices confirm them on their throne. The people of England have a say in the question of a monarch’s title; and without that recognition they are not kings of England. To our present sovereign, the nobles of the land offered their homage ere the crown was placed upon his brow; but he, as wise in this as in all else, would receive none till he was proclaimed King, not by a herald’s trumpet, but by the tongues of Englishmen. Besides, I say, I trust I shall never see the Earl of March wearing the English crown, because I

hope never to see an honourable nobleman forget his oath, nor a perjured monarch on the throne."

"And yet your fourth Harry forgot his," said the Duke of Orleans.

"Not till intolerable wrongs and base injustice drove him to it," answered the knight; "not till the monarch so far forgot his compact with the subject, as to free him from remembrance of his part of the obligation. Besides, I was then a boy; I found a sovereign reigning by the voice of the people; to him I pledged my first oath of fealty. I have since pledged it to his son; and I will keep it."

The two Counts and the Duke looked at each other with a significant glance; and after a moment's consideration, the Count of Vaudemont changed the subject, saying, "Well, good knight, such are your thoughts. We may judge differently. But say, how have you fared lately? I heard that our worthy Châtelain here had been somewhat harsh with you, resolving that you should not play him such a trick as the boy of Croy; and I or-

dered that such treatment should be amended. Has it been done? I would not have you used unworthily."

"It has been done in some points, my Lord," replied Richard of Woodville, "but not in all."

"Nay, good faith, with warning from your own lips that you sought to escape," answered the Count, "he was right not to relax on all points."

"But some he might have relaxed, yet held me safe," rejoined the young knight. "I have been cut off from all means of holding any communion with my friends, though it was most needful that I should urge them, to offer what terms might find favour for my liberation. I have been kept more like some felon subject of this land, than a fair prisoner of war."

"Nay, that must be changed," said the Duke of Orleans; "such was not your intention, I am sure, De Vaudemont?"

"By no means, noble Duke," answered the Count. "I will take order that it be so no more. You shall have liberty to write to whom you will, sir knight; and, indeed, having

a courier going soon to England, you will have the means right soon, if you will, of sending letters.—I have heard,” he added with a laugh, “that there is a certain noble gentleman of the name of Grey, with whom you have some dear relations—much in King Henry’s confidence, if I mistake not. Perchance were he to use his influence with that Prince, something might be done to mitigate the Dauphin’s sternness. We are still negotiating with England, though, by my faith, these preparations at Southampton, and this purchase of vessels from the Hollanders, looks more warlike than one might have wished.”

“If my liberation, noble Count, depends on Sir John Grey’s using his influence for ought but his Sovereign’s interests,” replied Richard of Woodville, “I fear I shall be long a captive. However, to him will be, perchance, my only letter; for he can communicate with other friends.”

“Do as you will, noble Lords,” cried the Count of Armagnac, who had been sitting silent for some time, gnawing his nail in gloomy medi-

tation; "but were I you I would suffer no such letters to pass. They will but tend to counteract all that you desire. Here you have in your hands one of the hearty enemies of France: that is clear from every word,—one who, at all risks, would urge his Sovereign to deeds of hostility against us, when we are already wrung by internal discord. Why should you suffer him to pour such poison into the hearts of his countrymen?"

"Nay, nay," replied the Count of Vaudemont; "my word is given, and I cannot retract it. We are less harsh than you, my Lord, and doubt not that this noble knight will say nothing against the cause of those who grant him this permission."

"On no such subjects will I treat, sirs," answered Richard of Woodville; "the matter of my letter will be simple enough, my own liberation being all the object."

"You must be quick, however" said the Lord of Vaudemont; "for, at morning song, to-morrow, the messenger departs."

The young knight replied that his letters

would be ready in an hour, and the three noblemen withdrew for a moment ; but he could hear that they continued speaking together in the passage ; and the next instant, the Duke of Orleans and the Count of Armagnac returned. “ We cannot suffer long letters, sir knight,” said the latter as soon as he entered ; “ if all you wish is to treat for your ransom, and to induce your friends to exert themselves for your liberation, you can send messages by word of mouth, which we can hear and judge of.”

“ But how will my friends know that such messages really come from me ?” demanded Woodville, with deep mortification.

“ Why,” replied the Count after a moment’s thought, “ you may send a few words in the French tongue, in our presence—for we have heard of inks and inventions which escape the eye of all but the persons for whom they are intended—you may send a few words, I say, merely telling the gentlemen to whom you write, to give credit to what the bearer shall speak.”

Woodville paused and meditated ; but then, having formed his resolution, he replied, “ Well,

my good Lord, if better may not be, so will I do. Send me the messenger when you will, and I will give him the credentials required."

"Call him now, my fair Lord of Armagnac," said the Duke of Orleans with a significant look. "He is below."

The Count soon reappeared with a stout, plain-looking man, habited as a soldier; and Woodville, after enquiring if he had ever been in England before, and finding that such was not the case, gave him directions for seeking out Sir John Grey in Winchester, from which town, the letters that had been conveyed to him, were dated. He then gave him messages to Mary's father; and, pointing out that it would be better to lose any amount of money, rather than remain longer in prison, he besought the knight to borrow a sum for him, to the value of one-half of his estates, and offer it to the Lord of Vaudemont as his ransom, adding somewhat bitterly, "Tell the good knight that I find, in France, the fine old spirit of chivalry is at an end, which led each noble gentleman to fix at once a reasonable

ransom for an honourable prisoner, and that nothing but an excessive sum will gain a captive's liberty.

The Duke of Orleans frowned, but made no observation in reply, merely speaking a few words in a low tone to the Count of Armagnac, who went to the door and called aloud for a strip of parchment and some ink.

What he required was soon brought; and he laid before the young knight a narrow slip, not large enough to contain more than a sentence or two, saying, "There, fair sir, you can write in the usual form, as follows,"

Richard of Woodville took the pen and addressed the letter at the top to Sir John Grey: the Duke of Orleans coming round and looking over his shoulder, while the Count of Armagnac stood on the opposite side of the table, and dictated what he was to write.

"You can say," he proceeded, "'These are to beg of you, by your love and regard for me, to hear and believe what the bearer will tell you on my part;' and then put your name."

Richard of Woodville wrote as he directed,

word for word, till he came to the conclusion, but then, he added rapidly, "touching my ransom," and affixed his signature so close, that nothing could be interpolated.

"What, have you written more?" cried the Count whose eye was fixed upon his hand.

"Touching my ransom," said the Duke of Orleans gazing across. The Count snatched up the parchment, and read it with a frowning brow, as if angry that his dictation had not been exactly followed; and then, beckoning to the Duke of Orleans and the messenger, he hurried abruptly out of the room. The door was not yet shut by the inferior person, who went out last, when the young prisoner heard the Count of Armagnac say to the Duke in a low growling tone, "This will not do."

"Let me see," said the voice of the Lord of Vaudemont, who had apparently been waiting behind the door. A blasphemous oath followed; and Richard of Woodville heard no more; but a smile crossed his countenance, for they had evidently sought to use him for some secret purpose of their own, and had been frustrated.

CHAPTER X.

THE FLIGHT.

A MONTH had passed, and Richard of Woodville sat alone in his solitary chamber, on a dark and stormy night, towards the end of September, reading by the glimmering lamp-light, a book which had been procured for him in the town by his page. The rain blew, the wind whistled, the small panes of glass in the casement rattled and shook, and the howling of the breeze, as it swept round the old tower, seemed full of melancholy thoughts. His own imaginations were heavy and desponding enough—and he eagerly strove to withdraw his attention, both from the voice of the storm without, and from the dark images that rose up in his own heart. But he could not govern his mind as he desired; and still from the pages

of the book, he would lift his eyes, and gazing into vacancy revolve every point in his fate, gaining alas ! nothing but fresh matter for sad reflection. He had seen no more of the Count de Vaudemont, the Duke of Orleans, or the Count of Armagnac, and had learned that they had quitted Montl'herry early on the day following that during which he had received their visit. He little heeded their departure, indeed, or desired to see them ; for he felt convinced that their only object had been to make a tool of him for secret purposes of their own ; and that, disappointed therein, they were in no degree disposed to show him favour, or even to listen to just remonstrance.

What grieved and depressed him more, was the unaccountable disappearance of the young clerk who had brought him the letters from Sir John Grey, but who had been no more seen by the page, after the arrival of the Count de Vaudemont in the town. The boy enquired at the widow's where the clerk had lodged, and was told he had left the place ; and no farther trace could be discovered of

the course he had pursued, or whither he had turned his steps. The distracted state of the country, indeed, the young knight thought, might have scared the novice away; for the page brought him daily reports of strange events taking place around, of factions, strife, and bloodshed, in almost every province of France, and of rumours that daily grew in strength and consistency, of foreign wars being speedily added to the miseries of the land. Large bodies of armed men passed through the town at different times; the garrison of the castle was diminished to swell the forces preparing for some unexplained enterprise; and the Châtelain himself was called to lead them to the field.

But a stricter guard was kept upon the prisoner than ever. Of the scanty band that remained in the castle, one always remained in arms at his door; and another was stationed at the foot of the stairs. Night and day he was closely watched; and the page himself was not permitted to go in and out, except at certain hours. All chance of escape seemed

removed ; and bitterly did Richard of Woodville ponder upon the prospect of long captivity, at the very time when under other circumstances, opportunity must have occurred for the exertion of all those energies by which he had fondly hoped to win glory, station, and renown.

He struggled hard against such thoughts, and all the bitterness they brought with them ; and, after indulging them for a few minutes, turned ever to the page of the book he was reading, and laboured through the crabbed lines of the ill-written manuscript ; finding perhaps, as much interest in making out the words as in their sense. It was after one of the fits of meditation we have spoken of, that he thus again applied himself to read, and turned over several pages carelessly, to see what would come next in the dull old romaunt, when, suddenly he saw a fresher page than any of the others, and found upon it, written in English, and in a different hand from the rest, but in lines of equal length, so as to deceive a careless eye, and lead to a belief that the words

were but a continuation of the poem, the following warning and intelligence :

“ Be prepared. Lie not down to rest. Take not off your clothes. King Henry is in France. The Earl of Cambridge, the Lord Scrope, and Sir Thomas Grey, have been executed for treason. Harfleur has been taken ; and the King is marching on through the land.”

There ended the lines, and the young knight closing the book, started up and clasped his hands with agitation and surprise. “ Harfleur taken, and I not there ! ” he cried. “ This is bitter, indeed ! I shall go mad if they do not free me soon—Sir Thomas Grey ? surely it cannot be written by mistake. I remember one Sir Thomas Grey, a powerful knight of Northumberland. The Lord Scrope, too, why he was the King’s chamberlain ! What can all this mean ?—Prepared—I will be prepared, indeed. Hark, they are changing the guard at the door. I must not let them see me thus agitated if they look in ; ” and seating himself again, he opened the book and seemed to read.

No one came near, however, for another hour, and Richard of Woodville gathered together all that might be needful in case his escape should be more near than he ventured to hope — the little stock of money that remained, a few jewels, and trinkets of gold and silver, and a dagger which he had kept concealed since his capture; for the rest of his arms and his armour had been taken from him as fair spoil. After this was done, he sat and watched; but all was silent in the château, except when the guard at his door rose and paced up and down the passage, or hummed a verse or two of some idle song to while away the hours.

At length, however, after a long dead pause, he heard a whisper; and then the bolt of the door was undrawn without, and rising quietly, he gazed towards it as it opened. The only figure that presented itself, was that of the guard, whom he had often seen before and noticed as apparently a gay, good-humoured man, who treated him civilly and asked after his health in a kindly tone whenever he had

occasion to visit him. The man's face was now grave, and Woodville thought a little anxious, and besides his own arms, he bore in his hand a sheathed sword with its baldric, and a large coil of rope upon his arm. Without uttering a word, he crossed the chamber, came close up to the young knight, and put the sword in his hands. Then advancing to the window, he opened it, fastened one end of the rope tight to the iron bar which ran up the centre of the casement, and suffered the other to drop gently down on the outside. Richard of Woodville gazed with some interest at this proceeding, as may be supposed. In the state of his mind at that moment, no means of escape could seem too desperate for him to adopt; and although he doubted that the rope, though strong, would bear his weight, he resolved to make the attempt, notwithstanding the tremendous height of the window from the ground.

Approaching the man, he whispered, "Would it not be better for you to turn the rope round the bar and let me down? My hands have

been so long in prison, that I doubt their holding their grasp very tightly."

The man merely waved his finger and shook his head, without reply, finished what he was about, and, taking from the table one of the gloves which the young knight had worn under his gauntlets, much to the spectator's surprise, dropped it out of the window.

"Now come with me," he whispered; "it is needful for us who stay behind, to have it thought for a day or two, that you have made your escape without help. The demoiselle has paid us half the money as she promised; and we will keep our word with her. There shall no danger attend you. We have better means of getting you out than breaking your neck by a fall from the casement."

"But you were to give me a word," said Richard of Woodville.

"Ay," answered the man, "I recollect: it was Mary Markham—Follow me."

Without hesitation, the prisoner accompanied him; but paused for an instant in some surprise on finding two armed men at the back

of the door, one holding a lamp in his hand. The guard who was with him, however, took no notice ; but, receiving the lamp from the other, led the way in a different direction from the staircase up which Woodville had been brought, when first he was conducted to his chamber of captivity. Then opening a door on the right, he entered a room, in the wall of which appeared a low archway, exposing to the eye, as the light flashed forward, the top of a steep small staircase.

“ I will go down first with the lamp,” whispered the man, “ that you may see where you are going. Give a heed to your footing too, for it is mighty slippery, especially on such a damp night as this.”

Thus saying, he led the way ; and Richard of Woodville followed down the winding steps, cut apparently in the thickness of the wall. Green mould and clammy slime hung upon all the stones as they descended, except where, every here and there, a loophole admitted the free air of heaven and chased the damp away. The steps seemed interminable, one after ano-

ther, one after another, till Woodville became sure that they were descending to a greater depth than the mere base of the castle ; and, looking round, as the lamplight gleamed upon the walls, he beheld no more the hewn stone work which had appeared above, but the rough excavation of the solid rock. At length the steps ceased, as passing along a vault of masonry, perhaps forty or fifty feet long, the man unbolted and unbarred a small but solid door covered with iron plates ; and in a moment the lamp was extinguished by the blast from without. All seemed dark and impenetrable to the eye ; the wind roared through the vault ; the rain dashed in the faces of Woodville and his companion ; but, giving the lamp an oath, as if it had been to blame for what the storm had done, the man set it down behind the door, and then walked on, saying, “ Keep close to me, for it is steep here.”

Following down a little path as the man led, the young knight’s eyes became more accustomed to the gloom, and he thought he descried at a short distance, a group of men and horses

standing under a light feathery tree. Hurrying on with eager hope, he demanded of his guide who the persons were whom he saw before him.

“Your saucy page is one,” said the guard; “but who the others are I do not know. The young clerk, I suppose, is one, and his servant the other; for I dare say the demoiselle would not come out on such a night as this, and faith, I cannot well see whether they be men or women in this light;” and he shaded his eyes with his hands, with very needless precaution, where scarcely a ray pierced the welkin.

At that moment, however, one of the figures moved towards him, asking “Is all right?”

“All, all,” answered the guard; “have you brought the rest of the money, master clerk?—Here stands the prisoner free; so my part of the bargain is done.”

“And there is the rest of the gold, good fellow,” replied the other speaker; “all right money, and well counted.”

“Ay, I must take it on your word,” said the man who had brought Woodville thither,

“my lamp has been blown out; but I may well trust you; for the other half was full tale and a piece over.”

“That was for chaffage,” replied the youth; “and if this noble knight gets safe to the King’s camp, you shall have a hundred pieces more; so go, and keep his escape, and the way he has taken, as secret as possible.”

“That I will for mine own sake,” answered the soldier; “or I should soon know gibbet and cord. Good night, good night!” and waving his hand, he turned away, while the young clerk addressed Woodville, saying, “you must put yourself under my guidance, noble sir, for a few hours, and then we shall be safe.”

“I have much to thank you for, young gentleman,” answered Woodville, following, as the other hurried on to the horses; and in a few minutes the knight, his page, the clerk, and the clerk’s servant were on their way. But to Woodville’s surprise, instead of taking any of the by-roads that led on through the country to remote villages and hamlets, they followed

the direct high road towards Paris, which he had gazed upon for many a day from his solitary chamber in the tower.

After proceeding some way in silence, without hearing any sounds which could lead them to believe that the knight's escape had been discovered, and that they were pursued, Woodville endeavoured to gain some information from the clerk of Sir John Grey, as to the means which had been taken to effect his liberation, and more particularly, as to the lady who had been mentioned by the guard.

On the latter point the youth replied not ; and on the former he merely said, " The means were very simple, noble knight, and you yourself saw some of them employed. Money, which unlocks all doors, was the key of your prison. The man who refuses ransom to a captive, had better see that he guard him sure ; for that which is a small sum to him, may be a great one to a gaoler, and one quarter of the amount offered for your redemption, served to set you free. But I think, sir," he added, " we had better speak as little as

possible upon any head, till we have passed the capital, for the tongue of an escaped prisoner, like the track of gore to the bloodhound, often brings him within the fangs of his pursuers."

Richard of Woodville judged the caution too wise not to be followed; and on they rode in silence at a brisk pace, with the wind blowing, and the rain dashing against them, through the darkness of the night, for somewhat more than two hours, following the broad and open road all the way, till the young knight thought they must be approaching Paris. More than once, indeed, he fancied that he caught a glimpse of some large dark mass before him; and imagination shaped towers and pinnacles in the black obscurity of night; but at length the clerk's man, who seemed to act as guide, pronounced the words "To the left!" and striking into a narrower, though still well beaten path, they soon came upon a river, flowing on dull and heavy, but with a glistening light, in the midst of its dark banks, which they followed for some way, till a bridge presented itself,

which they crossed, and then, turning a little to the right again, continued their course without drawing a rein, till the faint grey streaks of morning began to appear in the east.

Shortly after, a bell was heard ringing slowly, apparently at no great distance; and the young clerk said aloud, with a sigh of relief, "Thank God!"

"You are fatigued, young gentleman, with this long stormy ride, I fear?" said Richard of Woodville.

"A little," was the only reply; and in a few minutes they stopped at the gate of a small walled building, bearing the aspect of some inferior priory of a religious house. The bell was still ringing when they approached; but the door was closed; and the clerk and his attendant dismounted and knocked for admission. A board was almost immediately withdrawn from behind a grating of iron, about a palm in breadth and twice as much in length, and a voice demanded, "Who are you?"

"Bourgogne," replied the clerk; and instantly the door was opened without farther

enquiry. The arrival of the party seemed to have been expected; for two men, not dressed in monastic habits, took the horses without farther enquiry; a monk addressed himself to Woodville, and bade him follow; and, before he could ask any questions, he and his companions were led in different directions, the one to one part of the building, and the others to another.

With the same celerity and taciturnity, his guide introduced him to a small but comfortable chamber, provided him with all that he could require, and bidding him strip off his wet clothes, and lie down to rest in peace, returned with a cup of warm spiced wine, "to chase the damp out of his marrow," as he termed it. The young knight drained it willingly, and then would fain have asked the old man some questions; but the only information he could gain imported, that he was at Triel, the old man always replying, "To bed, to bed, and sleep. You can talk when you have had rest."

Woodville finding he could obtain no other

answer, followed his counsel ; and, wearied with such a journey after a long period of inactivity, but with a heart lightened by the feeling that he was free, he had hardly laid his limbs on the pallet before he was asleep.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PRISONER FREE.

THE only truly calm and happy sleep that man can ever obtain, is given by the heart at ease. Slumber, deep, profound, and heavy, may be obtained by fatigue of body or of mind; but even those great and tranquil spirited men, of whom it is recorded that, at any time, they could lie down, banish thought and care, and obtain repose in the most trying circumstances, must have gained the power, from that consciousness of having done all to ensure success in the course before them that human wisdom can achieve, or by that confidence in the resources within, which are the chief lightners of the load of life.

Richard of Woodville slept soundly, but it was heavily. It was the sleep of weariness,

not of peace. His mind was agitated even during slumber, with many of the subjects which might well press for attention in the circumstances in which he was placed; and unbridled fancy hurried him through innumerable dreams. Now he saw her he loved standing at the altar with another; and when the figure turned its face towards him, he beheld Simeon of Roydon. Then he stood in the presence of the King; and Henry, with a frowning brow, turned to an executioner, with the countenance of Sir Henry Dacre, but gigantic limbs, and ordered him to strike off the prisoner's head. Then came Isabel Beauchamp to plead for his life; and suddenly, as the King was turning away, a pale shadowy form, through which he could see the figures on the arras behind, appeared before the monarch, and he recognised the spirit of the murdered Catherine. Old times were strangely mingled with the thoughts of the present; and sometimes he was a boy again; sometimes still a prisoner in the castle of Montlherry; sometimes in the court of a strange prince, receiving

high rewards for some imaginary service. He heard voices, too, as well as saw sights; and the words rang in his ears,

For the true heart and kind,
Its recompence shall find ;
Shall win praise,
And golden days,
And live in many a tale.

At length when he had slept long, he suddenly started and raised himself upon his arm, for some one touched him; and looking round, he saw the clerk with his black hood still drawn far over his head, and the page who had been his fellow captive, standing by the side of the pallet.

“You must be up and away, sir knight,” said the young clerk, in the sweet musical tones of youth. “In an hour, a party of the Canonesses of Cambray, who arrived at noon under the escort of a body of my Lord of Charolois’ men-at-arms,* are to depart for Amiens, and you and your page can ride forward with them. I must here leave your fair

* The actual removal of the Canonesses of Cambray took place a few months later.

company; for I have other matters to attend to for my good Lord."

"But I shall see you again, young sir, I trust?" said Woodville; "I owe you guerdon, as well as thanks and deep gratitude."

"I have only done my duty, noble knight," replied the clerk; "but we shall soon meet again; for I suppose your first task will be to seek Sir John Grey, who is with the King; and I shall not be long absent from him,—so fare you well, sir."

"But where am I to find him?" demanded Woodville; "remember I am in utter ignorance of all that has happened."

"Nor do I know much," answered the clerk. "Rumour is my only source of information; for I have been cut off from all direct communication for many weeks. The only certainty is, that King Henry and his friends are now in France; that Harfleur surrendered a few weeks ago, and that he is marching through the land with banners displayed. You will hear of him as you go; and as soon as you know which way his steps are bent, you can

hasten to join him. But ere you discover yourself to any one else, seek out Sir John Grey, and take counsel with him, for false reports have been spread concerning you, and no one can tell how the King's mind may be affected."

"But tell me, at least, before you go," said Richard of Woodville, "who was the lady spoken of by the man who aided my escape at Montl'herry; and also, who it is that has generously paid the high sums which were doubtless demanded for my deliverance?"

"In truth, noble sir," replied the clerk, "I must not stay to answer you; for the people with whom I go are waiting for me; and I must depart immediately. You will know all hereafter in good time. It was the Lord of Croy who furnished the money needful. Now, fare you well, and Heaven give you guidance!"

Thus saying he departed, without waiting for farther question; and Richard of Woodville rising, dressed himself in haste in the same clothes which he had worn the day before,

but which he now found carefully dried and ready for his use.

“I must have slept sound, boy,” he said, speaking to the page who remained beside him; “for I do not think that at any other time my clothes could have been taken away from my bed-side, and I not know it.”

“You did sleep sound, sir knight,” replied the page laughing; “and talked in your sleep, moreover, while we were looking at you. But I can tell you who the lady was at Montl’herry, if you must needs know, as well as the clerk, for I saw her once speaking with the guard.”

“Say, say!” cried Richard of Woodville impatiently. “I would fain know, for she must be in peril, if left behind.”

“Why, it was the fair demoiselle,” answered the page, “who went with us from Nieuport to Ghent. I caught but a glimpse of her, indeed; but that bright face is not easily forgotten when once it has been seen.”

“And yet I never thought of her!” murmured Richard of Woodville to himself: “poor

girl, her deep gratitude would have merited better remembrance. Why smile you, boy? Every honourable man is bound to recollect all who trust him, and all who serve him."

"Nay, sir," replied the page, resuming a grave look, "I did but smile to think how often ladies remember knights and gentlemen, when they are themselves forgot."

"A sad comment on the baseness of man's nature," answered Woodville; "let it never be so with you, boy.—Now, see for the old monk, my purse is very empty, but I would not that he should call me niggard."

Some minutes passed before the page returned; but when he appeared, he came not alone, nor empty handed, for the old man was with him who had conducted the fugitive to his chamber the night before; and the one carried a large bottle and a tin cup, while the other was loaded with a pasty and a loaf of brown bread. Such refreshment was very acceptable to the young knight; but the good monk hurried him at his meal, telling him that his party were waiting for him; and, finishing the repast as

soon as possible, Woodville rose and put a piece of gold into his good purveyor's hand, saying, "That for your house, father. Now I am ready."

On going out into the little court between the priory and the abbey, he found some twelve or fourteen men mounted; and at the call of the monk who accompanied him, a party of six Canonesses and two novices, all closely veiled, came forth from the little lodge by the gate. They were soon upon the mules which stood ready for them; but the good ladies eyed with an enquiring glance the young stranger who was about to join their party; and one of them, as she marked the knightly spurs he wore, turned to her companions and made some observation which created a light-hearted laugh amongst those around. The moment after, they issued forth from the gates, and rode on at a quick pace in the direction of Gisors.

The day was evidently far advanced, but the sun, though somewhat passed his meridian, was still very powerful, so that the horses were distressed with the heat. The commander of the

men-at-arms, however, would permit no relaxation of their speed, much to the annoyance of the fair Canonesses, who had every inclination to amuse the tedious moments of the journey by chattering with the young knight, and the other persons who escorted them. In reply to their remonstrances, the leader told them that if they did not make haste, they would get entangled between the two armies, and then worse might come of it.

“Besides,” he said, “we have strict orders from our Lord the Duke to take part with neither French nor English; and it would be a hard matter to fall in with either, and not strike one stroke for the honour of our arms.”

Judging from his reply that he must have some knowledge of the relative position of the two hosts, Richard of Woodville endeavoured to gain intelligence from him, as to both the events which had lately taken place in France, and those which were likely to follow; but the man seemed sullen, and unwilling to communicate with his companion of the way, replying

to all questions merely by a monosyllable, or by the assertion that he did not know.

Thus passed by hour after hour, during their first and second day's journey, which brought them to the small town of Breteuil. They had hitherto paused either for the purpose of seeking repose, or of taking refreshment, at religious houses only ; but at Breteuil they took up their lodging for the night at the inn of the place, which they found vacant of all guests. The town, too, as they entered it, seemed melancholy and nearly deserted ; but the tongue of the good host made up for the stillness which reigned round ; and from him Richard of Woodville discovered that the apparent abandonment of the place by its inhabitants, was caused partly by the dread which some of the more wealthy townsmen had felt on the near approach of several large detachments of English troops, and partly by the zeal of the younger portion of the population, which had led them to proceed in arms to join the royal standard raised against the invaders. From him, too, the young knight found that the King of Eng-

land, at the head of his army, was marching rapidly up the Somme, in order to force the passage of that river, but that, as all the fords were strictly guarded, and French troops in immense multitudes were gathering on the opposite bank, it was scarcely possible that many days could pass without a battle.

“ ’Twas but yesterday at this hour,” said the host, “ that news reached the town that a fight had taken place at Fremont ; and then, this morning we heard it was all false, and that the English King has not yet passed the river.”

“ Where was he when last you heard of him ?” demanded Richard of Woodville, taking care to use the French tongue, which he spoke with less accent, perhaps, than most of the inhabitants of distant provinces.

“ Oh, he was at Bauvillers,” answered the landlord of the hostel, “ and he won’t get much farther without fighting, I fancy ; for he has got St. Quentin on his right, and our people before him. Heaven send that he may not march back again ; for then, he would come right through Breteuil ; and we are poor enough

without being pillaged by those vagabond English. I wonder your Duke does not come to the King's help with all his gallant men-at-arms, for then, these proud islanders would be caught in a net, and could not get out."

"It is a wonder," answered Richard of Woodville. "But, hark!" and, as he listened, he heard two sweet voices talking in the hall, in a tongue that sounded like English to his ear.

"I am sure of it," said the one, "and if it be so, I beseech you own it. My heart beats so, I can scarcely speak; but, I say again, I am sure of it; and that if you will, you have the power not alone to punish the guilty, for that perhaps, you may not desire—"

"Yes I do," replied the other in a somewhat sharper tone; "and in my own good time, I will do it."

"To punish the guilty, the time is your own," replied the first voice; "but, to save the innocent from utter destruction there is no time but the present."

"Ha! you must tell me more," said the second, in a tone of surprise; "from utter de-

struction, did you say ? Let us to our chamber. There we can speak at ease."

Richard of Woodville heard no more ; but what he did hear, cast him into deep thought ; and when the next morning they again set out upon their journey, he gazed with an enquiring eye at the Canonesses and their companions—and, mingling in their conversation, endeavoured to discover if the voices which he had heard, were to be distinguished amongst them. They all laughed and talked gaily with him, however, in the French tongue ; and he came to the conclusion, that though the host had assured him the inn was vacant when he and his party arrived, some other guests must have passed the night within its walls.

On their way during this day, he remarked that the leader of the men-at-arms, enquired often and anxiously in every town and village, for news of the two armies. Little information did he gain, except from vague reports ; but some of these it would appear, induced him to alter his course towards Amiens, and strike off to the right in the direction of Peronne.

The young knight had not been inattentive to everything that was said, and he heard that the King of France and all his nobility, were certainly gathered together in the direction of Bapaume, while the rumour grew stronger and more strong, that the English army had effected the passage of the Somme at some unguarded ford, in the neighbourhood of St. Quentin, and was boldly marching on towards Calais.

Such tidings, as the reader may well suppose, caused not a little agitation in the mind of the young soldier. Apprehension, lest a battle should be fought and he be absent, was certainly the predominant sensation ; but, still he had to ask himself, even if he arrived in time, where arms were to be procured, and a horse fit to bear him through such a strife as that which was likely to take place ? The beast he rode, though swift and enduring, was far too lightly formed to carry a knight equipped according to the fashion of that day ; and no weapons of any kind did he possess, but the dagger which he had retained when captured.

It seemed clear to him, also, that the leader of the Burgundian men-at-arms, had, in common with most of his countrymen, a strong inclination to take part with the French, who were naturally considered as kinsmen and allies, against the English, who were looked upon as strangers and enemies; and he felt convinced that the soldier's course had been altered in the hope, that, by falling in with the troops of the King of France, he might find a fair excuse for disobeying the more politic orders of his Prince, and take a share in the approaching combat.

Such thoughts brought with them some doubts of his own safety; and assuredly the dull, taciturn, and repulsive demeanour of the commander of the troop, was not calculated to win confidence. It was evident, however, that orders—which he trusted would meet with some respect—had been laid upon his sullen companion, to treat him with deference, and attend to his comfort and convenience; for, at every place where they stopped by the way, the best chamber, after their fair charge had been

attended to, was assigned to himself; and it was not without permission that the men-at-arms sat down to the same table with him, affecting much to reverence his knightly rank.

At length, after a long and hard day's ride, the party reached Peronne on the evening of the second day after quitting Breteuil; and, as they approached the gates, the young knight's confidence was somewhat restored, by the leader of the men-at-arms riding up to his side, and saying in a low tone, "I pray you, sir knight, be careful here, and give no hint of your being an Englishman; for we are coming on dangerous ground."

"I will be careful, my good friend," replied Richard of Woodville; "and, to say the truth, if we can discover where the King of England is, it may be as well for me to quit your party soon, as I may bring danger upon you for no purpose."

"We shall soon hear more," replied the soldier, "but you had better be beyond the walls of Peronne, before you part from us."

The scantiness of the band, and the title of

Burgundians soldiers, soon obtained admission for the little party ; but all was found in a state of bustle and activity within the town ; and every tongue was full of the late passage of the King of England at a short distance from the place. Great was the bravado of the inhabitants, who universally declared, that they wished he had sat down before their walls, to afford them an opportunity of showing what glorious deeds they would have performed ; and all spoke of the condition of the English troops as lamentable, and their fate sealed. The approaching battle was looked forward to, as a certain triumph for the arms of France, and rather as a great slaughter of a flying enemy, than a conflict with a powerful force. The very monks of the monastery where the men-at-arms received entertainment, while the Canonesses were lodged in the adjoining nunnery, were full of the same martial spirit ; and a few years earlier, it is probable, their superior would have put himself in armour to aid in the destruction of the foe. Frequently was Richard of Woodville appealed to as a knight, to pro-

nounce upon the likelihood of King Henry surrendering at discretion; and some difficulty had he so to shape his answers, as to escape suspicion.

From the conversation which took place, however, he learned that his own sovereign was in the neighbourhood of a small town at no great distance; and he resolved, as soon as he was free from the walls of Peronne, to hurry thither without any farther delay. He ventured, during the evening, to issue forth for a short time into the city, in the hope of being able to purchase arms; but scarcely any were to be found in the town; and such had been the demand for good armour, that the price had risen far beyond his scanty means. All that he could afford to buy was a strong well-tempered sword of a somewhat antique form, which he found in the shop of an armourer; and even for that the price demanded was enormous.

Returning to the monastery, he soon escaped from a sort of conversation that was by no means pleasant to his ear, by retiring to rest;

and though for some time he did not Sleep, yet when slumber did visit his eyelids, she came soft and balmy. The troubled thoughts died away—the anxious questioning of the unsatisfied mind ceased—the wild throbbing of the eager heart for the coming of the undeveloped hours, found repose; and he woke calm and refreshed with the first dawn of day, to meet whatever might be in store, with a spirit prepared and ready, and a body reinvigorated by the alternation of exertion and rest.

The monastery was one of those, not at all uncommon in those days, in which the vow of seclusion did not by any means exclude contrivances for enjoying at least some communion with the world. It was not surrounded by stern walls, and a large wing of the building rested upon the street, with windows small and high up indeed, and only lighting the chambers appropriated to the use of visitors, but which often afforded the monks themselves an excellent view of what was passing in the town without. In dressing himself with as

much care as circumstances would permit, Richard of Woodville approached one of these narrow casements, and gazed out upon the gay scene that was enacted below ; and, though so early, multitudes of people were to be seen passing along. While some stood for a moment gossiping with their neighbours, some were hurrying forward to their busy day, and others pausing to watch a considerable body of men-at-arms, who, in somewhat bad array, and without the display of much soldier-like order, came down from a house farther up.

When he saw them at a distance, the young knight's first thought was, "If all the French troops are like these, it will be no very difficult task to win a field of them." But as the troop came on, and the three leaders riding in front, passed under the window, he was struck by the arms of one of them who appeared in the middle. He could have sworn that the armour in which the knight was habited was familiar to his eye ; and it must be recollected that the ornaments which covered the harness of a man-at-arms in those days, were rarely the

same, so that means of identification were always at hand, such as we do not possess in the present times. But there, before his eyes, if he could believe their testimony, was the identical suit which had been sent to him by good Sir Philip Beauchamp, shortly before he left the shores of England. There were the fan-shaped palettes, with the quaint gilt figures in the corners, and the upturned pauldrons with the edge of gold, and the bacinet shaped like a globe, with the enamelled plate on the forehead bearing Ave, Maria!"

There could be no doubt that it was the same; and Woodville's brow knit for a moment, and his teeth closed tight. But the next instant he smiled again, asking half aloud, "How could a prisoner of near two years escape pillage? If I meet you in the field, my friend, I will have that harness back again for Mary's sake, or I will lie low."

Thus saying he resumed his toilet, and the troop passed on. A moment after he heard a voice singing, and turning to the window again he looked out. The sounds did not come from

below ; but there was a large projecting mass of building, with loopholes on the three sides, which protruded into the street on his right ; and it seemed to him that the sounds came thence. He listened and caught some of the words, but every now and then they died away in the cadence of a wild French air of the period, but those he could distinguish seemed so well suited to his situation at the time, that he strove eagerly to hear more :—

“ Away, away, to the field of fame,
Gallant knight, gallant knight, hie away,”

were the first sounds he could make out ; but the next stanza was more distinct, and went on thus, in the French tongue :—

“ Think of thy lady at home in her bower
On her knees, for her lord to pray,
Think of her terror and hope in the hour
When your banner floats proud in array,
Well aday !

“ Away, away, to the field of fame,
Gallant knight, gallant knight, hie away !
For King, for country, and deathless name
Is each stroke that is stricken to-day,
Trara la, trara la, trara lay !

“ The hopes of years and the fame of life
Are lost or won ere evening’s ray,
Thy father’s spirit looks down on the strife,
And bids thee to battle away,
Well aday !

“ Away, away, to the field of fame,
Gallant knight, gallant knight, hie way !
For king, for country, and deathless name
Is each stroke that is stricken to-day,
Trara la, trara la, trara lay !

As he was listening for more, a knock was heard at the door of his chamber, and bidding the applicant come in, Richard of Woodville was somewhat surprised to see the personage whom we have designated as the clerk’s man, enter in some haste.

“ I thought you were still sleeping, sir knight,” he said ; “ but I ventured to wake you, as, by Heaven’s good will, it seems there will be a battle shortly, and methought you would like to hear such tidings, and be present at such a deed.”

“ I have heard that such is likely to be the case,” answered Woodville, “ and am eager enough to set out, my friend. But how came you here ? and where have you left your master ? ”

“ Oh, I have followed you close,” the man replied ; “ I only waited to see that the enemies’ hounds had not got scent of the deer ; but the slot has been crossed by so many other herds, that they soon lost the track. I have wakened master Isambert who leads the Duke’s party, and he will be in the saddle in half an hour. As to my master, he has gone by the other road, and I dare to say has joined Sir John at Brettenville, or Beauvillers, or where they passed the Somme.”

“ Is this Isambert very faithful, think you ?” asked the young knight.

“ Not too much so,” replied the man calmly ; “ but in your case he dare as soon give his throat to the knife, as do you wrong ; for the Duke, and the Count, and the Lord of Croy, would all have bloody vengeance, if ought of evil befel you ere you are with your own people. However, it will not be amiss to quit him soon ; for I find a body of his own folks have just marched out under Robinet de Bournonville—as wild a marauder as ever a wild land brought forth ; and it is well to get out of such com-

pany when they are too many ; for what one man dare not do, a number think nothing of."

"Then," said the young knight, "this good Isambert's arrival at Triel was not a matter of chance, as I thought it."

"Oh, no !" replied the other ; "he came thither on purpose to give you aid. He might have saved fifteen leagues by another road ; but the Duke's commands were not to be disobeyed. However, noble knight, you had better get some breakfast ; for Heaven only knows when we shall have an opportunity of putting anything into our mouths again. You might as well follow a flight of locusts, they tell me, as our army. The refecti^oner is serving out meat to the men, and mead, too, for we have quitted the land of wine."

The young knight bade him go and provide for himself ; and, soon following, he took a hasty meal before he mounted with the rest. The whole party were speedily in the saddle ; the streets of the town were soon passed, and the gates of Peronne closed behind them.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MYSTERY.

It is quite right and proper to suppose that the reader is thoroughly acquainted with the position, situation, and peculiarities of every town, to which we may be pleased to lead him ; and, therefore, it may be unnecessary to remind him, that Peronne is surrounded by marshy ground, which soon gives way to a hilly country, which, at the time I speak of, was of a very wild and desolate character. The party of Burgundian horse, with Richard of Woodville and the fair Canonesses, rode on through this track towards Arras, at the same quick pace as during the preceding part of their journey ; and even the ladies themselves, were glad to keep their mules at a rapid amble ; for the weather had undergone a sudden change,

and a foul north-easterly wind was blowing sharp, cutting them to the marrow. The troop was now increased by the presence of the clerk's servant; and with him, as they went, the young English gentleman held more than one consultation, which resulted in Woodville adopting the resolution of quitting the escort, shortly after passing the Abbey of Arrouaise, where it was proposed that they should stop to dine.

The whole party, however, were destined to be disappointed of their comfortable meal; for, when, after passing Feuillancourt, Rancourt, and Saily, they approached the gates of the monastery, and rang the great bell, no one responded to the summons for some time. As they sat upon their horses waiting for admission, the sight of a neighbouring barn burnt to the ground, and still smoking, showed them that some party of pillagers had passed that morning; and they began to think that the monastery was deserted, which was certainly the case with the little village itself. The sound of voices within, however, at length induced them to make another application to

the bell ; and, after a short pause, a monk's head appeared at the window over the gate, exclaiming, " Get you gone, brothers, get you gone. You cannot enter here."

The leader of the troop remonstrated, and announced his name as Isambert of Agincourt ; but the reply was still the same, the monk adding by way of explanation, " We have suffered too much from you all already this morning. We will open our gates to none, and we have cross-bow men within, who will shoot if you do not retire.—Do you not see the barns burning ?"

" But that was done by the savage Englishmen," replied Isambert, " we are friends. We are men of Burgundy."

" So were these," answered the monk, " but the Duke and the English understand each other ; for that sacrilegious villain, Robinet de Bournonville, had Englishmen with him. Get you gone, I will hear no more ; and if you do not go, the men shall shoot."

The sight of several men upon the wall, with crossbows in their hands, gave effect to

the old man's words; and Isambert withdrew slowly, muttering curses at his friend, Robinet de Bournonville, for depriving him of his dinner. When he reached the bottom of the next slope, he halted to consult his companions and Richard of Woodville as to what was to be done to procure food for themselves and for their horses; and he finally determined to return to Sailly, where a good hostel had been observed as they passed.

But Richard of Woodville took this opportunity of separating himself from the rest of the party, and announced his intention to Isambert of Agincourt, who seemed by no means sorry to get rid of him. The clerk's man and his own page were the only companions whom the young gentleman expected to go with him; and he was not a little surprised when the two novices drew aside from the ladies of Cambray, and the taller of the two begged, that he would have the kindness to give them the benefit of his escort as far as Hesdin, saying, "We were on our way to Amiens, and thence to Montreuil, and not to

Arras, whither, it seems now, this noble gentleman is bending his steps."

One of the Canonesses interposed a remonstrance, representing the danger of falling in with some party of English troops; but she did not venture to use a tone of authority, as the novices belonged to another Order; and the young lady who had already spoken, replied briefly, in a resolute and somewhat haughty tone, "that she had no fear, and, knowing what it was her duty to do, should do it."

"Well, settle the matter as you please, fair ladies," cried Isambert of Agincourt; "only be quick, for I have no time to lose;" and no farther opposition being made, Richard of Woodville undertook to protect, as far as he could, the two novices on the way, only warning them in general terms, that as soon as he discovered the exact position of the armies, he must join them, promising however, to send on his page and the man with them to Hesdin. This being understood, he took leave of the commander of the men-at-arms; and choosing the first road to the left, under the direction

of the clerk's man, who seemed thoroughly acquainted with the whole country, he proceeded for some way at a quick pace, till they reached a village, which seemed to have escaped the predatory propensities of the soldiery on both parts, and there paused to feed his horses, and to procure some refreshment for himself and his companions.

Though he had tried to entertain the two young ladies to the best of his power as they rode along, either their notions of propriety, or some anxiety in regard to their situation, rendered them cold and taciturn in their communications; and, unlike the gay Canonesses from whom they had just parted, they neither seemed inclined to converse with the knight or with each other, nor ever raised their veils to take a coquettish look at the country through which they passed. They now refused refreshment, also, saying, "It is not our habit to eat with men;" and as the house, at which they had bought some bread and mead, had but one public room, Richard of Woodville, with his two male companions, retired to the door while

the horses fed, and left the shy novices to partake of what was set upon the table if they thought fit.

While there, the young knight entered into conversation with the good peasant who supplied them, and, though the jargon which the man spoke was scarcely intelligible, made out, that the English army had marched from Acheux on the preceding day, and had encamped the night before amongst the villages near the source of the Canche. Of the movements of the French army he could learn nothing, however, which led him to a false belief, that he was likely to meet with no interruption from the enemy in following the march of his own sovereign.

As the young knight rode on, and came into the country through the which the English army had passed, the sad and terrible effects of that barbarous system of warfare, which was universal in those times, made themselves visible at every step. Houses and villages burnt, cattle slaughtered and left half consumed by the wayside, and fruit trees cut down for the purpose of lighting fires, presented themselves

all along the road; and the painful feelings which such a scene could not but produce, were aggravated by the lamentations of the villagers, who felt no terror at the appearance of a party consisting of women and of men without any arms except those usually worn in time of peace, and who poured forth their complaints to Woodville's ear, pointing to their ruined dwellings, and their little property destroyed, and cursing the ambition of kings, and the ferocity of their soldiery.

The young knight felt grieved and sorrowful; but he was surprised to find that the bitterness of the peasantry was less excited against the English themselves, than he had expected; and, on guiding the conversation with one of these poor men in a direction which he thought would lead to some explanation of the fact, the villager replied vehemently, "The English are not so bad as our own people. They are enemies, and we might expect worse at their hands; but, wherever the King or his brothers were, they destroyed little or nothing, and only took what they wanted. But, since they

have passed, we have had two bands of Frenchmen, who have destroyed everything that the English left, on the pretence that we favoured them, though they knew that we could not resist. The Duke of York took my meat and my flour ; but he left my house standing, and injured no one in the place. That cursed Robinet de Bournonville, and his companion the captain Vodeville, burnt down my house and carried off my daughter."

The young knight consoled the poor man as well as he could, and gave him a piece of silver, thinking it somewhat strange, indeed, that one of Bournonville's companions should have a name so nearly resembling his own. He and his companions rode on, however, still finding that the band which he had seen issue forth from Peronne in the morning, had gone on before them, till they reached the town of Acheux, which was well nigh deserted. Most of the houses were closed and the doors nailed up ; but they had evidently been broken into by the windows, and had been rifled of all their contents. In the mere hovels, indeed, some cottagers were

seen ; and on enquiring of one of these where they could find any place of rest, as night was coming on, the man led them to a large, ancient, embattled mansion in the centre of the town, which, though stripped of everything easily portable, still contained some beds and pallets. An old woman was found in the house, which she said belonged to the Lord of Acheux, and for a small piece of silver she agreed to make the strangers as comfortable as she could, seeming—perhaps, from old experience of such things—perhaps, from the obtuseness of age—to feel the horrors of war less keenly than any one they had yet met with. Money, however, made all her faculties alive, and declaring that she knew, notwithstanding the pillage which the place had undergone, where to procure corn for the cattle, and bread, eggs, and even wine, for the party, she set out upon her search, while Woodville and his two male companions led the horses and mules to the vacant stable, and the two novices remained in one of the desolate chambers up the great flight of stairs.

When the beasts had been tied to the manger,

the young knight returned with the man and the boy to their fair companions; but the old woman had not yet returned; and as night was falling fast, he lighted a small lamp which he found in the kitchen, and returned with it to the chamber above. A few minutes after, while he was expressing his sorrow to the two maidens that he could find no better lodging for them, the sound of a small party of horse was heard below, and a voice exclaimed in English, "Ah! there is a light.—I will lodge here, Matthew. Take my casque. This cursed cuirass pinches me on the shoulder: unbuckle this strap. Keep a watch for Ned, or any one he may send."

The voice was not unfamiliar to Richard of Woodville; and a heavy frown gathered upon his brow. His first impulse was to lay his hand upon his sword, and take a step towards the door; but then, remembering what fearful odds there might be against him, he turned to the window and looked out. He could distinguish little but that there were ten or twelve men below; and as he gazed, a step was heard

upon the stairs. The young gentleman turned hastily, to close and bolt the door; but to his surprise he beheld the taller of the two novices with the lamp in her hand, walking rapidly towards the entrance; and turning towards him, she said in a stern and solemn tone, "Leave him to me!"

The next instant she had passed the door; and when Richard of Woodville reached it and looked out into the gloomy corridor, he could see her, by the lamp that she held in her hand, meet Simeon of Roydon, upon whose face the full light fell, as he was just reaching the top of the stairs. Her back was towards the young knight, but he perceived that she suddenly raised her veil, and he heard her say in English, and in a deep and solemn tone, "Ha! Have you come at length?"

Whatever might have been the import of those words on the ear of him to whom they were addressed, he staggered, fell back, and would have been precipitated from the top to the bottom of the stairs, had he not by a convulsive effort grasped the rope that ran along

the wall. The light was instantly extinguished, and the moment after Richard felt the novice's hand laid upon his arm, drawing him back into the room. They all listened, and steps were heard rapidly descending the stairs, followed by the voice of Simeon of Roydon exclaiming, "No, no, I cannot lodge here—I will not lodge here! Mount, and away.—We will go on."

"But, noble knight," said another voice,—

"Away, away!" cried Simeon of Roydon again. "Mount! or by Heaven—" and immediately there came the sound of armed men springing on their horses, the tramp of the chargers as they rode away, and the fainter noise of their departing feet.

"In the name of Heaven, who are you?" demanded Richard of Woodville, addressing her who had produced such a strange effect.

"One whom he bitterly injured in former days," replied the novice; "and whom he dares not face even now. Ask no more: that is enough!"

"It were well to quit this place," said the

other girl, in a low voice." And the clerk's man urged the same course adding, "He may take heart and return,—besides, he spoke of some one coming."

Richard of Woodville remained in silence, meditating deeply for several minutes, with his arms folded on his chest, and his eyes bent down. The faint outline of his figure was all that could be seen in the dim semi-darkness that pervaded the room; but the novice who had proposed to go, approached him gently, and laying her hand upon his arm, again urged it, saying, "Had we not better go?"

"Well," said the young knight, starting from his reverie as if suddenly awakened from a dream, "let us go. But yet a cold night ride, with no place of shelter for two young and tender things like you, is no slight matter. Run down, boy, and light the lamp again—"

"No, no, no!" cried one of the two ladies eagerly. "Light it not! let us go at once,—Hark! there is some one below."

"The old woman's step," cried the page; "I will run down and see what she has got."

He returned in a moment with the good dame, bearing more than she had promised. She easily understood the reason why the light which she offered was refused ; and after taking some wine and bread, the whole party descended to the stable, whence the horses were brought forth ; and Richard of Woodville, paying her well for her trouble and her provisions, bade the page take the remainder of the bread to feed the poor beasts, when they could venture to pause. In less than a quarter of an hour the young knight and his companions were once more on their way, under the direction of the clerk's man, who proposed that they should bear a little towards Doulens, which would lead them out of the immediate track that the English army had followed.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CAMP.

SEPTEMBER days are short and bright, like the few hours of happiness in the autumn of man's career. September nights are long and dull, like the wearing cares and infirmities of life's decline; but often the calm grand moon will shed her cold splendour over the scene, solemn and serene, like the light of those consolations which Cicero suggested to his friend, for the privation of the warmer joys and more vivid hopes that pass away with the spring and summer of existence, and with the departure of the brighter star.

The wind was sinking away, when Richard of Woodville rode out with his companions from the ruined village of Acheux, and soon fell into a calm soft breeze; the moon rose up

in her beauty, and cleared away the dull white haze that had been spread over the sky, during the whole day ; and, as the travellers wended on in silence, the features of the scene around were clearly marked out by the rays, every bold mass standing forth in strong relief, every deep valley seeming an abyss, where darkness took refuge from the eye of light. For about eight miles farther they pursued their way almost in total silence ; but at the end of that distance, the hanging heads and feeble pace of the horses and mules showed, that they would soon be able to go no farther ; and the young knight looked anxiously for some place of repose.

That part of the country, as the reader is aware, is famous for its rocks and caverns. There is a very remarkable cave at a place called Albert, but that was at a considerable distance behind them, and on their left. In passing along, however, by the side of a steep cliff, which ran at the distance of a few hundred yards from the road, with a green sward between, the moon shone full upon the rocky

face of the hill, and the eye of Richard of Woodville soon perceived the mouth of a cavern, like a black spot upon the surface of the mountain. After some consultation with his companions, and some suggestions regarding wolves and bears, Woodville determined to try whether shelter could not be found in this "antre vast," for a few hours; and, riding up as far as the footing was safe towards the entrance, the whole party dismounted, and the young knight entering first, explored it by the feel to the very farther end, which, indeed, was at no great distance, as it luckily happened, for in some cases, such an undertaking might have been attended with considerable peril.

It was perfectly vacant, however, and Woodville brought the two novices within the brow of the rude arch, assuring them that they might rest on a large stone near the mouth in safety. He then led his own horse up, the others following, and taking the bits out of their mouths, the men distributed amongst them the bread they had brought from the village, which the poor beasts ate slowly, but with

apparent gladness, and then fell to the green grass on the mountain side with still greater relish.

All the party were silent, for all were very weary ; and while the clerk's man laid himself down on the sandy bottom of the cave, and the page sat nodding at the entrance, Richard of Woodville remained standing just within the shadow with his arms folded on his chest ; and the two novices remained seated on the stone where they had first placed themselves, with their arms twined together. The young knight thought that they would soon fall asleep ; but such was not the case ; and when, after the moon had travelled some way to the south, the sound of a horse's feet made itself heard through the stillness of the night, trotting on towards Acheux, the slighter and the shorter of the two girls rose suddenly, and coming forward gazed towards the road, on which, at this time, the rays were falling strong. A moment after a single horseman rode by at a quick pace, but turned not his head in the direction of the cavern, and seemed little to

think that he was watched ; for the figure of the slumbering page might well have passed for some stone of a quaint form, in that dim light, and the horses had been gathered together under the shadow of a rock.

She strained her eyes upon the passing traveller ; and then, as he rode on, she returned to her companion and whispered something to her. The other replied in the same low tone, and, after a brief conversation, they relapsed into silence ; and the young knight stripping off his cloak, gave it to them to wrap themselves in, and counselled them to seek some repose against the fatigues of the coming day. They would fain have excused themselves from taking the mantle ; but he insisted, saying that he felt the air sultry ; and then seating himself at a distance, he closed his eyes, strove to banish thought, and after several efforts dozed lightly, waking every five or ten minutes and looking out to the sky, till at length a faint grey streak in the east told him that morning was at hand. Then rousing his companions, he called them to repeat their matin prayers, and after they

were concluded, hastened to prepare the horses and mules for their onward journey.

Day had not fully dawned ere they were once more on the way; but a considerable distance still lay between them and Hesdin; and the few and scanty villages, that were then to be found in that part of the country, were in general deserted, so that but little food was to be found for man or beast. At one farm house, indeed, the two weary girls found an hour's repose on the bed of the good farmer's wife. Some bread and meat, and, also, one feed of corn was procured for the horses and mules; but that was all that could be obtained during the whole day, till at length about Fremicourt, they met with a man from whom they learned the exact position of the two armies, which were now drawing nearer and nearer to each other, the head quarters of the one having been established at St. Pol, and those of the English at Blangy.

Shortly after, the clerk's man pointed out a narrow road to the left, saying, that leads to Hesdin; and Woodville drawing in his rein,

turned to his fair companions saying, "Here, then, we must part; for I must on to Blangy with all speed. The man and the boy shall accompany you; and God guard you on your way."

"Farewell, then, for the present, sir knight," replied the taller of the two girls. "We shall meet again I think, when I may thank you better than I can now."

"But take your page with you, at least, sir," said the other; "we shall be quite safe, I doubt not."

Richard of Woodville would not consent, however; and giving the boy some directions, he waved his hand, and rode away. Once—just as he was going—he turned his head, hearing voices speaking, and thinking some one called him by name; but the younger novice, as she seemed, was talking with apparent eagerness to the clerk's man, and he caught the sounds—"As soon as he is gone."—"Take plenty with you—"

The young knight perceived that the words were not addressed to him, and spurred for-

ward. Evening was coming on apace; and Blangy was still ten or twelve miles distant; but his horse was exhausted with long travelling and little food, and nothing would urge him into speed. At a slow walk he pursued his way, till at length, just as the sun touched the edge of the western sky, the animal stopped altogether, with his limbs trembling and evidently unable to proceed. Richard of Woodville dismounted; and taking the bit out of the horse's mouth, he relieved him from the saddle, and led him a little way from the road, saying, "There, poor beast, find food and rest if you can." He then left him, and walked on a-foot.

The red evening light at first glowed brightly in the sky; but soon it grew grey, and faint twilight was all that remained, when the road wound in to a deep forest, covering the sides of a high hill. Woodville had heard that Blangy was situated in the midst of woodlands, and his heart felt relieved as he approached; but the darkness increased as he went on, and at length the stars shone

out above. Soon after a hum as of a distant multitude met his ear ; but it was lost again as the road wound round the ascent amidst the tall trees ; and all was silent and solemn. About a quarter of a mile onward, where the hill was steep, the path rose above the scrubby brushwood on his left, and he could see over the forest to a spot where a reddish glare rose up from the bottom of the valley. But somewhat farther in the forest itself, on a spot where the taller trees had fallen before the axe, and nothing but thin underwood remained, he caught a sight of three or four fires, the light of which shone upon some half dozen tents ; and the figures of men moving about across the blaze were apparent, notwithstanding the darkness of the night.

The distance might be three or four hundred yards ; and Richard of Woodville, wearied and exhausted, resolved to make his way thither, rather than take the longer and more tedious course of following the road to the bottom of the hill. Plunging in, then, sometimes through low copse, sometimes

amongst tall trees, he hurried on, feeling faint and heavy-hearted again; for the first joy of rejoining his countrymen had passed away, and from the rumours he had heard, he not a little doubted of his reception. He knew, indeed, that he had nothing to reproach himself with, and felt sure that he should easily prove the falsehood of any charge against him; but it was painful to think that, after long imprisonment, and the loss of many a bright day and fond hope, he should be met with coldness and frowns upon his first return. The body, too, weighed upon the spirit as it always does in every moment of lassitude and exhaustion, so that all things seemed darker to his eye than they would have done at another moment.

On he walked, however, his feet catching in the long briars, or striking against the stumps of felled trees, till at length a man started up before him, and exclaimed, "Who goes there?"

"A friend!" answered the young knight in the same English tongue.

“What friend?” demanded the soldier advancing.

“My name is Woodville. Lead me to your Lord, whoever he is,” replied Richard.

“Here, Mark!” cried the man to another, who was a little farther down, “take him to Sir Henry’s tent;” and suffering the knight to pass on, he laid himself down again amongst the leaves.

The second soldier gazed at the young knight steadily for a moment by the blaze of the burning wood, and then told him to follow, murmuring something to himself as he led the way. They passed the two fires without any notice from the men who were congregated round, and approached the tents, while from the valley below, rose up some wild strains of instrumental music, the flourish of trumpets and clarions, mixed with the sound of many human voices, talking, laughing, and shouting.

“Have you seen the enemy yet?” asked Richard of Woodville.

“No, sir,” replied his guide; “but we shall

see him to-morrow, they say. Here is the knight's tent. *You* may go in, I know."

The man laid a strong emphasis on the word "*you*," and turning to look at him, as he held back the hangings of the tent, the young knight thought he recognised an old familiar face. The next instant he was within the canvass, and beheld before him a man of about his own age, seated at a board raised upon two tressils, with a lamp burning, and a book spread out under his eyes. His head was bent upon his hand, and the curls of his thick short hair were black, mingled here and there with a silvery thread. He was deep in study, and heard not the rustle of the tent as the stranger entered, nor his foot-fall within ; and Richard paused for an instant and gazed upon him. As he did so, his eye grew moist ; and he said in a low voice, "Dacre !—Harry !"

Sir Henry Dacre started, and raised his worn and care-wrought countenance ; and springing forward, he clasped Woodville in his arms, exclaiming "Oh, Richard—can it be you?"

Then looking with an apprehensive eye round

the tent, he said, "Thank God, there is no one here!—Did they know you?—Did any one see you?"

"Yes," replied Richard of Woodville; "two of your men saw me, Dacre.—But what means all this?—Why should Richard of Woodville fear to be seen by mortal man?"

"Oh, there are strange and false reports about, Richard," replied Dacre, with a sorrowful look;—"false, most false, I know them to be.—I am too well aware how men can lie and calumniate. But you will find all men, except some few true friends, against you here; for day by day, and hour by hour, these rumours have been increasing, and every one, even to the peasantry of the land, seem to be leagued against you."

"Give me but some food, Dacre, and a cup of wine," answered Richard of Woodville, "and I will meet them this minute face to face. Why, Dacre, I have nought to fear. I have had neither time nor opportunity to do one base act, if I had been so willed. I am but a few short days out of bonds,—and my first act

will be to seek the King, and dare any man on earth to bring a charge against me."

"Not to-night, not to-night," cried Sir Harry Dacre; "let there be some preparation first—Hear all that has been said."

"Not an hour will I lie under a stain, Harry," replied his friend. "I am weary, faint, and exhausted for want of food. Give me some wine and bread—throw open the door of your tent; and let all your men see me. Let them rejoice that I have come back to do myself right.—I fear not to show my face to any one."

Dacre, with a slow step and thoughtful brow went to the entrance of the tent and called to those without, to bring food and wine; and the board was soon spread with such provisions as the camp could afford. Seating himself on a coffer of arms, Woodville ate sparingly, and drank a cup of wine, asking from time to time, "Where is Sir John Grey?—Where is my good uncle?—He will not be absent from an enterprise like this, I am right sure."

"Here, here; both here," answered Sir

Henry Dacre ; “ and Mary and Isabel are even now at Calais,—but be advised, my friend. Do not show yourself to-night. The whole court is crowding round the King in the village down below. Let the battle be first over. You will do good service, I am sure. You can fight in armour not your own, and then—”

“ Armour, Harry !” cried the young knight, “ I have no armour ; but the armour of a true heart ; and that is proof against the shafts of calumny. It never shall be said that Richard of Woodville paused when the straightforward course of honour was before him. Thought, preparation, care, would be a slander on my own good name—I need no meditated defence. I have done nought on earth that an English knight should blush to do ; and he who says so lies—. Now I am ready for the task—Ha, Hugh of Clatford, is that you ?” he continued as some one entered the tent, “ You have just come in time to be my messenger.”

“ Full glad I am to see you, noble sir,” answered the stout yeoman, “ we have a world of liars amongst us, which is the only thing that

makes me fancy these Frenchmen may win the day. But, now you are come, you will put them to silence, I am sure."

"Right, Hugh, right!" replied Woodville. "But you have some word for Sir Harry. Speak your message; and then I will give mine."

"'Tis no great matter, sir," said Hugh of Clatford. "Sir Philip begs you would send him two loads of arrows, Sir Henry, if you have any to spare, that is all," he continued, addressing Dare; and when the knight had answered, Woodville resumed eagerly, "If you are a true friend, Hugh, you will go down for me to the King's quarters, and say to the first high officer that you can speak to, that Sir Richard of Woodville, just escaped from a French prison, is here in camp, and beseeches his Grace to grant him audience, as he hears that false and calumnious reports, to which he gives the lie, have been spread concerning him, while he has been suffering captivity."

"I will call out our old knight himself," replied Hugh; "he is now with the King at the

castle, and will do the errand boldly, I am sure."

"Away then, quick, good Hugh, for I am all impatience," said Woodville; and the yeoman retired.

When he was gone, Sir Harry Dacre would fain have spoken with his friend regarding all the reports that had been circulated of him during his absence; but Woodville would not hear; and, taking another cup of wine, he said, "I shall learn the falsehoods soon enough, Harry.—Now tell me of yourself and Isabel."

But Dacre waved his hand, "I cannot talk of that," he said, "'tis the same as ever. She knows how I love her, and her father too; but the phantom of a doubt still crosses her—even her; that I can see, and good Sir Philip answers bluffly as is his wont, that he knows it is false; but yet—but yet! Oh, that accursed 'but yet,' Richard. The plague spot is upon me still. That is enough. The breath of one foul vapour can obscure the sun, and the tongue of one false villain can tarnish the honour of a life."

"Poo, nonsense, Harry," answered his companion, "I will show you ere many hours be over, how lightly I can shake falsehood off. 'Tis still your own heart that swells the load. I had not thought my uncle was so foolish—so unkind."

He whiled him on to speak farther ; but the same cloud was still upon Sir Henry Dacre's mind. It was unchanged and dark as ever. Study, to which he had given himself up, had done nought to clear it away ; reflection had not chased it thence ; time itself had not lightened it.

Half an hour passed and then there came a tramp as of armed men. Dacre looked anxiously on his friend's face ; but Woodville heard it calmly ; and when the hangings were drawn back and a royal officer entered, followed by a party of archers, no change came upon his countenance.

"What is your pleasure, Sir William Porter ?" asked Dacre looking at him earnestly.

"I am sorry, sir, to have this duty," replied the officer ; "but I am sent to arrest

Sir Richard of Woodville, charged with high treason."

Woodville smiled; "Are your orders, sir, to bring me before the King?" he demanded.

"No, sir knight," answered Sir William Porter, "I am to hold you a prisoner till his Grace's pleasure is known."

"Then I must ask a boon," replied Woodville, "which is simply this, that you will keep me here in ward, till one of your men convey this to the King. He gave it me long ago, and bade me in a strait like this, make use of it. Let your messenger say, that I claim his royal promise to be heard when I ask it."—At the same time, he took a ring from his finger; but then, recollecting himself, he said, "But stay, I will write—so he commanded."

"You must write quickly, sir knight," replied Sir William Porter; "for the King retires early, and I must not wait long."

"My words shall be very few," answered Woodville; and Sir Harry Dacre, with hasty hands, produced paper and ink. The young knight's words were, indeed, few. "My Liege,"

he wrote, "I have returned from long captivity, and find that I have been charged with crimes while my tongue was silent in prison. I know not what men lay to my account; but I know that I have done no wrong. Your Grace once promised, that if I needed ought at your royal hands, and sealed my letter with the ring you then gave me, you would read the contents yourself, and at once. I do so now; but I have no boon to ask of you, my Liege, but to be admitted to your presence, to hear the charges made against me, and to give the lie to those who made them. Love to your royal person, zeal for your service, honour to your crown, I own I have ever felt; but if these be not crimes, I have committed none other against you, and am ready to be sifted like chaff, sure that my honesty will appear. God grant you, royal Sir, his great protection, victory over all your enemies, and subjects as faithful as

"RICHARD OF WOODVILLE."

He folded, sealed it, and delivered it to the royal officer, saying, "Let the King be be-

sought, to look at the seal. His royal promise is given that he will read it with his own eyes."

Sir William Porter examined the impression with a thoughtful look, and then replied abruptly, "I will take it myself.—Guard the tent," he continued, turning to his men, and withdrew.

With more speed than Woodville or Dacre had thought possible, he returned, and entering, bade the prisoner follow. "The King will see you, sir knight," he said, "your letter has had its effect."

"As all true words ever will have on his noble heart," replied Woodville rising.

"I will go with you, Richard," exclaimed Sir Harry Dacre. "Who is with the King, Sir William?"

"His uncle, noble sir, his brothers, the Earl of Warwick, Sir Philip Beauchamp, Sir John Grey, Philip the Treasurer, and some others. But we must speed, for it is late;" and, leading the way from the tent, he walked on towards the small town of Blangy, with Woodville and his friend, followed by the archers, and one or two of Dacre's servants.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CHARGES.

“WE shall see, my good Lord, we shall see,” said Henry V. to the Earl of Stafford as he stood surrounded by his Court in the hall of the old castle of Blangy. “I have, it is true, learned sad lessons, that those we most trust are often the least worthy.—Nay, let me not say ‘often,’ but rather, sometimes; and yet,” he added after a pause, “perhaps I am wrong there, too; for it has not happened to me in life, that one, of whom I have had no misgivings, has proved false.—May it never happen. Those, indeed, of whom I would not believe the strange and instinctive doubts which sometimes, from a mere look or tone, creep into the heart—those whom I have trusted against my spirit, may have, indeed, betrayed me; but

there is something in plain straightforward honesty that may not always suit a monarch's humour, but which cannot well be suspected—and besides—but it matters not. We shall see."

It was evident to all, that his thoughts turned to that dark conspiracy against his throne and life, which had been detected and punished at Southampton; and as every one knew it was a painful and a dangerous subject with the King—the only one, indeed, that ever moved him to a hasty burst of passion, all were silent; and while the King still bent his eyes to the ground in meditation, Sir William Porter, afterwards raised to the then high office of grand carver, entered and approached his Sovereign.

"The prisoner is without, Royal Sir," he said.

"Let him come in," answered Henry; and raising his face towards the door, he regarded Woodville as he walked forward, followed by Sir Henry Dacre, with that fixed unwavering glance that was peculiar to him. His eyelids did not wink, not the slightest movement of

the lips or nostril could be observed by those nearest him ; but the light of his eye fell calm and grave upon the young knight, like the beams of a wintry sun.

The demeanour of Woodville was not less like himself. With a rapid step, firm and free, with his broad chest expanded, his brow serene but thoughtful, and with his eyes raised to the monarch without looking to the right or left, he advanced till he was within two steps of Henry, and then bowed his head with an air of calm respect. He was quite silent, however, till the King spoke.

“ You have asked to be admitted to our presence, Sir Richard of Woodville,” said the King ; “ and, according to the tenor of a promise once made, we have granted your request. What have you to say to the charges made against you ? ”

“ I know not what they are, my Liege,” replied Woodville ; but, whatever they may be, if they lay to my account ought of disloyalty to you, I say that they are false.”

“ And have you heard nothing ? ” asked the

King in a tone of surprise, "has no one told you?"

"He would not hear me, Sire," said Dacre stepping forward. "He said he would meet them unprepared in your own presence."

"It is well," rejoined Henry; "then you shall hear them from my lips, sir knight; and God grant you clear yourself; for none wishes it more than I do.—Did I not command you, sir, now well nigh twenty months ago, to retire from the forces of our cousin of Burgundy and return to your native land, for our especial service?"

"Such commands may have been sent, my Liege, but they never reached me," replied the young knight; "and when a mere rumour found its way to me, I was on the eve of setting out on that fatal enterprise in which I lost my liberty.—I can appeal to the noble Lord of Croy when the tidings came, to speak how much pain they gave me, and how ready I was to abandon all and follow your commands."

"Be it so," answered Henry; "that point shall be enquired into. You say you have been

a prisoner. How long is it since you were set at liberty?"

"But five days, Sire," replied the knight, "no longer than was needful to journey from Mont l'herry hither."

"And did you come alone?" demanded the King.

"No, Sire," said Richard of Woodville; "from the abbey at Arrouaise, I was accompanied by my page, a man who aided in my escape from prison, and two young novices journeying to Montreuil. I sent the two ladies from Fremicourt on to Hesdin, under the escort of the man and the page, and rode on hitherward myself, till my horse would go no farther. The rest of the way I walked on foot."

"But before you reached Arrouaise, were you alone?" enquired the King.

"No, Sire, as far as Triel, I had but the man, the boy, and a clerk of Sir John Grey's with me, who effected my liberation between them; but after that I was accompanied by a small body of Burgundian horse, who were escorting some Canonesses and these two novices on the way."

“Add, and burning monasteries, plundering villages, and cutting off the stragglers of your Sovereign’s army, sir knight,” rejoined the King sternly.

Richard of Woodville gazed in his face for an instant in surprise, and then broke into a gay laugh, saying,

“I avow to God, quoth Harry,
I shall not lefe behynde,
May I mete with Bernard
Or Bayard the blynde.”

Now I understand your Grace, for I have come upon the track of these men, and somewhat wondered to hear in the mouth of hinds and peasants, the name of Woodville or Vodeville as they called it, coupled with curses. Nay, more, my Liege, I saw in the good town of Peronne, through which I passed, a man in my own armour, at the head of a large troop of men-at-arms.”

“I saw him, too, Dickon,” cried the voice of old Sir Philip Beauchamp, “as he followed our rear at Pont St. Remie; and would have sworn that it was thyself, had I not known thy true heart from a boy.”

“A strange tale, sir knight,” said the King without relaxing his grave frown; “and the more strange, when coupled with the facts of your having never received my commands to return, sent long ago, and my messenger having brought me word as if from your mouth, that you could not obey, as you had taken service with the Duke of Burgundy for two years and a day.”

“He is a false knave, my Liege,” replied the knight; “and, as to my ever having forgotten your Grace’s commands even for a day, not to engage myself for long, that I can prove, for thank God my contract with the good Duke John, I have always kept about me. Here it is; and if you look, Royal Sir, you will see I have not been unmindful of my duty.”

Henry took the paper, which Woodville produced, from the young knight’s hand, and read it over attentively, pausing at one clause and pronouncing the words aloud, “And it is, moreover, agreed between the said high and mighty Prince Philip, Count of Charolois, and

the said knight, that should the King of England, Henry the Fifth of that name, require the aid and service of the said Sir Richard of Woodville, he shall be at liberty to retire at any time without let or hindrance from the forces of the said Count of Charolois or of his father and redoubted Lord, the Duke of Burgundy, together with all such men as have accompanied the said knight from England ; and, moreover, that he shall receive all the passes, safe-conducts, and letters of protection which may be needful for him to return to his own land in safety, and that, without delay or hesitation, but even at a moment's notice."

The King when he had read these words gave a momentary glance around ; but then, turning to the young knight again, after examining the date of the paper and the signature, " You were at this time, assuredly in your devoir," he said ; " and this was but a month before my messenger set out ; but we have heard from Sir Philip de Morgan some strange tales of adventures in the town of Ghent, which may have changed your purposes."

“My Lord, I do beseech your Grace,” answered Woodville gravely, “to give ear to no strange tales till they be fully proved. I have already suffered from such stories, and have disproved them to one here present much interested to know the truth;” and he turned his eyes towards Sir John Grey who stood beside the Earl of Warwick. “For one so long a prisoner, not knowing where to find a single person who was with him at a remote period, it is not easy in a moment, to show the real state of every fact alleged; but if your royal time may serve, I am ready to tell the simple tale of the last two years; and if I afterwards prove not to your own clear conviction, that every word I speak is truth, send my head to the block when you will.”

“You shall have full time, sir knight,” replied the King; “at present, it is late; and though we must sleep but little, yet some repose every man must have. Your tale cannot be heard to-night. However, you now know that you are charged first with refusing to serve your King in arms against his enemies,

which may, perhaps, be false. This paper affords some presumption against the accusation—Secondly, you are charged with following our royal host with men of Burgundy, and in arms levying war against your Sovereign. You have we are told, been seen by many, so traitorously employed, and your name, you yourself allow, is in the mouths of all the peasantry.”

Henry paused a moment, as if expecting assent; but Woodville only replied by a question, “May I ask, Sire,” he said, “if a certain Sir Simeon of Roydon is in your host?”

“Ha!” cried the King, his face lighting up, “What would you say on that score?”

“Simply that I have suspicions, mighty Prince,” replied the young knight; “but *I* will charge no man without proof. These two charges are false, and I will make it manifest they are so; first by testimony; then by my arm. Is there ought else against me?”

“Alas, there is,” answered the King; “and the most grave of all. Have you brought that letter which I sent for, my Lord?”

“Yes, Sire,” replied the Earl of Arundel

stepping forward, and placing a paper in the King's hands. "That is the one your Grace meant, I believe."

"The same," answered Henry, gazing upon it with a countenance both stern and sad. "Come forward, Sir Richard of Woodville. Is this your hand-writing?"

Woodville looked at it, and recognized at once the letter which he had written to Sir John Grey whilst in prison. "It is, my Liege," he replied boldly, looking in the King's face with surprise. "I wrote that letter; but I know not how it can affect me."

"That will be proved hereafter, sir," answered the King in a stern tone; "but remember, I have doomed my own blood to death for the acts which this letter prompted; and, by my honour and my life, I will not spare the man that wrote it. According to the right of every Englishman, you shall be tried and judged by your peers; but when the axe struck the neck of Cambridge, it crushed out the name of mercy from my heart. In me you find no grace."

“My Lord, I need none,” replied Richard of Woodville in a tone firm, yet respectful, “for I have done no wrong. I never yet did hear that there was any crime in a captive writing to a friend for ransom. This letter prompted nothing; and I am in much surprise to hear your royal words announce therein a matter of complaint against me.”

“The man to whom it was written, sir,” said the King, “proved himself a traitor, and took the gold of France to sell his sovereign’s life, and his country’s welfare to the enemy.”

Richard of Woodville gazed in surprise and bewilderment from the King to Sir John Grey, and from Sir John Grey to the King, while the father of her he loved looked not less astonished than himself. But Henry after a short pause added aloud, “Remove him, Sir William Porter. If God give us good success in the coming fight, he shall have fair trial and due judgment. If the will of heaven fight against us, though perchance he may escape to live, I do believe, from what I have known of him in former days, that he will find bitter punishment in his own heart

for this dark deed ;” and he struck his fingers sharply upon the paper, which he still held in his hand.

“ Some way—I know not what—you are deceived, my Liege,” said Richard of Woodville with perfect calmness. “ However, I have but one favour to ask, and that is, that you will not let a false and lying accusation so weigh against me as to deprive me of my right and glory—that of fighting for my King, I would say ; and I pledge you my honour and my soul that, if the day be lost, which God forbend, I will not survive the battle ; if it be won, I will bring my head to your Grace’s feet, to do with as seems meet to you ; for I am no traitor, so help me heaven ! and, on that score I fear neither the judgment of man nor that of God.”

“ I know that you are brave right well, Sir Richard,” answered the King ; “ but we will have no traitors fight upon our side.”

The young knight cast his eyes bitterly towards the ground ; and Henry could see the fingers of his hand clench tight into the palm ;

but Sir Henry Dacre stepped forward, and said, "I will be his bail, my Liege."

"And I too, royal sir," cried old Sir Philip Beauchamp; "I will plight land and liberty, life and honour, that he is as true as my good sword. Have I not known him from a babe?"

"You are his uncle, sir," answered the King; "and, in this case, cannot judge."

"I am in no way akin to him, my gracious Sovereign," said Sir John Grey, advancing from the side of the Earl of Warwick; "but I fear not also to be his bail. My life for his, if he be not true."

Richard of Woodville crossed his arms upon his chest; and, raising his head as his friends spoke, looked proudly round, saying, "There is something to live for, after all."

At the same moment, Henry turned to the Duke of York, and spoke a word or two with him and the Duke of Clarence. "Your request cannot be granted," he said, in a milder tone; "but yet, we will deal with you in all lenity, Sir Richard; and, therefore, we will commit you to the ward of Sir John Grey,

with strict orders, however, that he hold you as a close prisoner till after your trial. And now, I can hear no more; for the night is well spent, and we must march at dawn. Take him, Sir John; you have a guard, and answer to me for him with your life."

"I will, my Liege," replied Sir John Grey advancing, and taking the young knight's arm. "Come, Richard, you shall be my guest. I have no doubts;" and, bowing to the King, he retired from the presence.

Sir Philip Beauchamp and Sir Harry Dacre followed quickly, and overtook them on the stairs; and the old knight shook his nephew playfully by the shoulders, exclaiming, "We will confound the knaves yet, Dickon. But what is this letter?"

"Merely one I wrote to Sir John Grey," replied Richard of Woodville; "beseeching him to communicate with the bearer touching my ransom."

"I never received it," replied Sir John Grey. "It did not reach my hands; but, please God, I will see it ere I sleep."

“ I must fight at this battle,” said Richard of Woodville thoughtfully ; “ I must fight at this battle, my noble friends.”

Sir John Grey replied not, but shook his head gravely, and led the way to the house where he was lodged.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FOX IN THE SNARE.

SPREAD out in a long line over the face of the country, the English army occupied a number of villages, keeping a good watch lest the enemy, large bodies of whom had been apparent during the morning, should take them by surprise and overwhelm them by numbers. Small parties of the freshest men were lodged in tents between the different villages, so that a constant communication might be kept up, and support be ready for any point attacked; and, throughout the whole host, reigned that stern and resolute spirit, the peculiar characteristic of the English soldiery, and which has assured them the victory in so many fields, against more impetuous, but less determined, adversaries. Yet none, however resolute and brave in Henry's army, could help feeling that a

great and perilous day was before them, when it was known, that at least a hundred and twenty-five thousand men, comprising the most renowned chivalry of Europe, were collected to oppose a force of less than twenty-five thousand, worn with a long and difficult march, and weakened by sickness and want of provisions.

Nevertheless, during the whole night of Thursday, the 24th of October, from hamlet and village, from priory and castle, from tent and field, wherever the English were quartered, rose up wild bursts of martial music floating on the air to the French camp, as, round the innumerable watch-fires which lighted the whole sky with their lurid glare, sat the myriads of the enemy in their wide extended position at Roussauville and Agincourt.

In one of the small villages near the headquarters of the King, was stationed Sir John Grey, who now having recovered all the great possessions of his family, appeared in the field at the head of a large body of men, whose services under his banner procured for him, at

an after period, as the reader is probably aware, the earldom of Tankerville. The house which he inhabited during that night, was the dwelling of a farmer; and in one of the small rooms thereof sat Richard of Woodville, at about eleven o'clock at night, conversing with Mary's father, with a somewhat gloomy and anxious air.

"I have seen it myself, Richard," said Sir John Grey; "the superscription is clear and distinct, 'To Sir Thomas Grey, Knight,' and not one word is mentioned therein of anything like ransom."

"Then it has been falsified!" cried Richard of Woodville; "for my letter was to you. Why should I write to Sir Thomas Grey, a man I know nought of? I never saw him,—hardly ever heard of him. Even now I am scarcely aware of who he was, or what he did."

"He was an arch villain, Richard," replied the knight. "The only one, of all the three, who took the gold of France. Cambridge and Scroop had other views, which they nobly hid within their own bosoms, lest they should injure others; but this man was a traitor indeed, and

he, ere his death, gave this letter, it seems, into the King's own hands, as that which began his communication with the enemy. He even laid his death at your door, for having written to him by the French suborner.—But here is Sir Henry Dacre.—What is it you seek, good knight? You seem eager about something.”

“There are people without requiring to speak with you, Sir John,” answered Woodville's friend. “They have got a man in their hands, who, they say, is a knave, sent to you by one you know.”

“I want no knaves,” replied Sir John Grey; “but I will see who it is;” and he went out.

“Now, what speed, my friend?” continued Dacre, grasping Woodville's hand; “what says Sir John?”

“That it must not be,” said Richard of Woodville. “That his duty to the King would not suffer it, even were I his son.”

“Then we must try other means,” answered Dacre hastily. “You shall fight to-morrow, Woodville. God forbid that you should lose a field like this. You shall take my armour, and

I will ride in a different suit. Only be ready, at a moment's notice," he added ; " for as soon as Sir John is in the field, I will bear you off from the men he leaves on guard."

Woodville smiled gladly ; for certain of his own honour and of his own conduct, he scrupled not to take advantage of any means to free himself from the restraint under which he was held. He had no opportunity, however, of communicating farther with his friend ; for the next moment Sir John Grey returned, followed by several men-at-arms and archers, with a slight, but long-armed man in their hands, habited in a suit of demi-armour, such as was worn by the inferior soldiery, but with a vizored casque, which concealed his face.

" Take off his bacinet," said Sir John Grey ; and the helmet being removed, displayed to the eyes of Richard of Woodville, the countenance of his former servant Dyram. The man gazed sullenly upon the ground ; and Sir John Grey, after eyeing him for a moment, seated himself by Woodville, saying, " I have seen this man before methinks."

“And so have I, too often,” rejoined the young knight; “he was once a servant of mine, and shamefully betrayed his trust. Keep him safe, Sir John, I beseech you; for on him may greatly depend my exculpation with the King.”

The man turned round suddenly towards him, and exclaimed, “Ay, and so it does. On me, and me alone, depends your exculpation. Your fate is in my hands.”

“Less than you think, perchance, knave!” answered Sir John Grey; “for I hold here strange lights to clear up some dark mysteries. Yet speak, if you be so inclined; you may merit mercy by a frank avowal.”

“Send these men hence,” said Dyrham, looking to the soldiers; “I will say nought before them.”

“Go, Edmond,” replied the elder knight, speaking to the chief of those who had brought the prisoner in; “yet, first tell me where you found him, and how?”

“Guided by Jim of Retford,” said the soldier, “we caught him about a mile on this side of a place called Acheux, I think, some twenty

miles hence or more. We found that letter upon him, noble sir, and that," he continued, laying down on the table two pieces of paper. We might not have searched him, indeed, but he tried to eat that last one. You may see the marks of his teeth in it; and Jim of Retford forced his mouth open with his anelace to take it out. He says 'tis treason; but I know not, for I am no clerk."

"Sir John Grey held the paper to the light and read. "Treason it certainly is," he said, when he had done. "One fourth of the booty secured to Edward Dyram, if the scheme succeeds!—Ay, who are these?—Isambert of Agincourt, Robinet de Bournonville, and S. R.? Who may he be, fellow?"

But Dyram was silent; and Sir Harry Dacre cried eagerly, "Let me see it, sir: let me see it!—Ay, I know it well.—Woodville your suspicions are true."

"Go, Edmond, and guard the passage," said Sir John Grey; "I will call when you are wanted.—Now, sir, will you speak?"

"Ay," answered Dyram, as he saw the man

depart, and the door close ; “ I will, sir knight. First, I will speak to you, Richard of Woodville, and will tell you that I have the power to sweep away every cloud that has fallen upon you, or to make them darker still.—I know all,—you need tell me nothing ;—how you refused to serve your own monarch, they say ; how you wrote to aid in bribing Sir Thomas Grey ; how you have followed the English camp like a raven smelling the carrion of war—all, all—I know all ! ”

“ Then clear up all ! ” answered Woodville ; “ and you shall have pardon.”

“ Pardon ! ” cried Dyrham, with a mocking laugh ; and then suddenly turning to Sir Harry Dacre, he went on. “ Next to you, I will speak, sir doleful knight, and tell you, that from your fair fame, too, I can clear away the stain that hangs upon it—black and indelible as you think it. I can take out the mark of Cain, and give you back to peace and happiness.”

Sir Harry Dacre gazed upon him for a moment in stern silence, and then replied, “ I doubt it.”

“Doubt not,” replied Ned Dyram. “I can do it, I will ; but upon my own conditions.”

“What may they be ?” asked Sir John Grey. “If they be reasonable, such information as you may proffer may be worth its price. But, remember, before you speak, that your neck is in a halter, and that this paper conveys you to the provost, and the provost to the next tree, if your demands be insolent.”

“I am not sure of that,” replied Ned Dyram boldly. “Sir John Grey is not King in the camp. What say you, Sir Richard of Woodville, will you grant my conditions, provided that I save you from your peril, and give you the means of proving your innocence within an hour ?”

“I must hear them first, knave,” replied the young knight ; “I will bind myself to nothing, till they are spoken.”

“Oh, they are easily said,” answered Ned Dyram. “First, I will have twenty miles free space between me and the camp—So much for security. Then I will have your knightly word, that a fair maiden whom you know, named Ella Brune, shall be mine.”

“Where is she?” demanded Richard of Woodville. “I know not where she is; I have not seen her for months, nay years.”

“Oh, she is not far off when Richard of Woodville is here,” said the man with a sneer. “I know all about it;—ay, Sir John Grey, the smooth-faced clerk, the corrupter of the men of Montl’herry. Can you not produce her?”

“Perhaps I can ere long,” replied Sir John Grey; “But what if I do?”

“Why, then,” answered Dyam in the same saucy tone, “before I speak a word, I will have her promise to be mine. She will soon give it, when she knows that on it hangs Richard of Woodville’s life.—She has taught me herself, how to wring her hard heart.”

“She shall give no such promise for me,” replied Woodville sternly. “I tell thee, pitiful scoundrel, that I would rather, with my bosom free of ought like guilt, lay my head upon the block, than force a grateful and high-hearted girl to wed herself to such a vile slave as thou art. If your insinuations should be true, and she has done for me all that you say, full well

and generously has she repaid the little I ever did to serve her. She shall do no more, and least of all make her own misery to save my life."

"Then die, sir knight," rejoined Ned Dyram, "for you will find, with all your wit, you cannot struggle through the toils in which you are caught."

"It may be so," said Sir John Grey; "but by my life, bold villain, you shall die too."

"Perhaps so," answered Dyram with sneering indifference; "but I can die in silence like a wolf."

"As you have lived," added Richard of Woodville; "so be it."

"Stay," said Sir Harry Dacre; "are these the only conditions you have to propose? Will nought else serve your purpose as well?—Gold as much as you will."

"Nought, nought," replied Dyram. "You know the terms, and can take or reject them as you think fit. If you like them well, sir knight, and would have your innocence of the crime laid to you, proved beyond all doubt—if you would save your friend too, you have

nought to do but seek out this fair maiden. She is not far, I am right sure—and if you but bring her in your hand to me, I will condescend to accept her as my wife, and set you free of all calumny.—You struck me once, Richard of Woodville. You cannot expect that I should forget that bitter jest, without a bitter atonement.”

“Send him away, Sir John, I do beseech you,” cried Woodville warmly. “My temper will not long hold out; and I shall strike him again.”

“Ho, without there!” cried Sir John Grey. “Take this man away, Edmond, and put gyves upon him. Have him watched night and day; for I now know who he is; and a more dangerous knave there does not live. He will escape if Satan’s own cunning can effect it.”

“Well, you know the terms,” said Ned Dyrham turning his head as two of the soldiers drew him away by the arms. “Think better of it, noble knights. Ha, ha, ha! What a story to tell, that the fair fame of Sir Harry Dacre, and the life of Sir Richard of Woodville, both mighty men of war, should depend

upon one word of poor Ned Dyram !” and with this scoff he was led away.

Dacre paused in silence, leaning his brow thoughtfully upon his hand ; and Richard of Woodville for several moments conversed with Sir John Grey in a low tone.

“ Ay, you may well think it strange, Richard,” said the elder knight aloud, “ that I, who at one time was taught to fancy this girl your paramour, should suddenly place such trust in her, as to let her follow her will in all things, and put means at her disposal to effect whatever she thought fit. But do you see that ring ?” and he pointed to a circle of gold set with a large sapphire on his finger ; “ it is a record, Richard, of a quality, which in her race, though it be a humble one, is hereditary. I mean gratitude. I once rescued from injury the wife of a good soldier, named Brune, the son of one of Northumberland’s minstrels. ’Twas but a trifling service which any knight would have rendered to a woman in distress ; but that good man, her husband, in gratitude for this simple act, sacrificed his own life to save

mine. It was on Shrewsbury field twelve long years ago ; and when I left him with the enemy on every side, I gave him that ring, in the hope that he might still escape ; but he was already sorely wounded in defending me ; and ere he died, he sent it as a last gift to his daughter. When I saw it by mere accident, and heard that daughter tell her feelings towards you, I recognised the spirit of her race ; and had it cost me half the lands I had just recovered, she should not have wanted means to carry out her plan for serving you.—What now ?” he continued, turning to one of his attendants who entered.

“ The King, sir knight, desires your presence instantly, to consult with Sir Thomas of Erpingham for the ordering of to-morrow’s battle.”

“ I come,” replied Sir John Grey ; and then turning to Richard of Woodville, he added, “ This is fortunate ; perchance what I have to tell him this night, may make him somewhat soften the strictness of his orders.” Thus speaking, he withdrew, leaving Richard of Woodville alone with Sir Harry Dacre.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ORDERING OF THE BATTLE.

WE must follow, for a short space, the steps of Sir John Grey, who hurried after the messenger, to the quarters of the King, which lay at about half a mile's distance from his own. As I have shown, he intended to speak with the monarch upon the intelligence regarding the young knight, which he had received that night ; but an opportunity for so doing, was not so easily found as he had expected.

The moon was shining bright and unclouded ; not a vapour was in the sky ; and, as he approached the guards, which were stationed round Henry's temporary residence, he could hear the sound of voices, and see distinctly a small party walking slowly up the road. One was half a

step in advance of the rest ; and there was something in the air and tread which told the knight at once that there was the King. Hurrying after, he soon overtook the group, and joined in their conversation in a low voice : but far more weighty thoughts than the fate of any individual, now occupied all. Their speech was of the morrow's battle, their minds fixed upon that which was to decide the destiny of thrones and empires,—which was to deal life and death to thousands ; and Richard of Woodville seemed forgotten by all but Sir John Grey himself.

The King, too, walked on before in silence, with his eyes bent upon the ground, and his look grave and thoughtful ; and it was not till, passing out of the village, he came upon the brow of a small acclivity, from which the whole of the enemy's line of watch-fires could be descried, that he paused or spoke. The moment that he stopped, the distinguished soldiers who followed him gathered round ; and, turning towards them with a countenance now all smiles, the monarch said, “ Somewhere near this spot must be the place—I marked it this

afternoon. — Ha ! Sir John Grey, I hardly thought you would have time to come.”

“ A little more in advance, Sire,” replied Sir Thomas of Erpingham, answering the former part of the King’s speech. “ If you take your stand here, the Frenchmen will have space to spread out their men beyond the edge of the two woods ; but, if you plant your van within a half-bowshot of the edge of those trees, they must coop themselves up in the narrow space, where their numbers will be little good.”

“ You are right, renowned knight,” said the King, laying his hand familiarly upon Erpingham’s shoulder. “ I did not mean just here. The standard shall be pitched where yon low tree rises ; the vanward a hundred paces farther down, the rearward where we now stand.”

“ Does your Grace mark that meadow there, upon the right ? ” asked Sir John Grey ; “ close upon the edge of the wood.”

“ I do, good friend,” answered Henry ; “ and will use it as I know you would have. But, go down first, and see how it is defended ; for we must not expose our foot-men to the French horse.”

Sir John Grey and the Earl of Suffolk hurried on, while Henry examined the rest of the field ; but they soon returned with information, that the meadow was defended by a deep and broad ditch, impassable for heavy horses ; and Henry replied, “ Well, then, we will secure it for ourselves by our good bowmen. Though we be so few, we can spare two hundred archers to gall the Frenchmen’s flank as they come up.”

“ Ay ! would to Heaven,” cried one of the gentlemen present, “ that all the brave men, who are now idle in England, could know that such a field as this lies before their King, and they had time to join us.”

“ Ha ! what is that ?” cried Henry. “ No by my life ! I would not have one man more. If we lose the day, which God forbid we should, we are too many already ; and if we win this battle, as I trust in Heaven we shall, I would not share the glory of the field with any more than needful. Come, my good lords and noble knights, let us go on and view the ground farther, and when all is decided we will place

guards and light fires to insure that the enemy be not beforehand with us." Thus saying, he walked on, conversing principally with Sir Thomas of Erpingham upon the array of his men ; while the other gentlemen followed talking together, or listening to the consultation between the King and his old and experienced knight. As they went on, various broken sentences were thus overheard—as, "Ay, that copse of brushwood will guard our left right well—and the hedges and ditches on the right, will secure us from the charge of men-at-arms. Their bowmen we need not fear, my Liege."

"I have bethought me, my old friend, of a defence, too, for our archers in the front. We have all heard how at Bannockburn, in the time of good King Edward, pitfalls were dug to break the charging horse. We have no time for that ; but I think, if we should plant before our archers, long stakes pointed with iron, a little leaning forward towards the foe, the British bows would be secure against the chivalry of France ; or, if they were assailed and the enemy did break through, 'twould be

in wild disorder and rash disarray, as was the case at Cressy."

"A marvellous good thought, my Liege ; but every battle has a change. Those who were once attacked, become the attackers, and should such be our case, how will you clear the way for our own men from the stakes that were planted against the enemy?"

"That must be provided against, Sir Thomas. Each man must pull up the stake near him."

"Nay, my Liege," said Sir John Grey joining in, "Let a hundred billmen be ranged with the second line of archers ; and, at a word given, pass through and root up the stakes."

"Right, right, Sir John," answered the King. "Then the fury of our charge, when charge we may, will not be checked by our own defences. Our van must be all archers, with the exception of the brown bills—and I think to give the command—"

"I do beseech you, my Lord the King," said the Duke of York advancing from behind, "to let me have that post, and lead the van of your battle. Words have been spoken,

and rumours have been spread, which make me eager for a place of danger.—You must not refuse me, royal Prince.”

“Nor will I, cousin,” answered Henry. “On your honour and good faith, I have as much reliance, as on your skill and courage, which no man dares to doubt.—Are you not a Plantagenet?”

The Duke caught his hand and kissed it; and, if he had taken any share, as some suspected, in the conspiracy of Southampton, he expiated his fault on the succeeding day, by glorious actions and a hero's death.

“Now,” said the King, after some further examination of the field, “You understand our disposition, noble knights; and to you I entrust it to secure the ground during the night, and to make the arrangements for to-morrow. Cousin of York, you lead the van. I myself, with my young brother, Humphery of Gloucester, will command the main battle. Oxford and Suffolk, you and the Lord Marshal shall give us counsel. My uncle of Exeter shall lead our rearward line, and this good Knight of Erpingham shall be our marshal of the field. Let

all men in the centre fight on foot ; and let the cavalry be ranged on either wing to improve the victory I hope to win. When all is ready, back to your beds and sleep, first praying God for good success to-morrow. Then, in the morning early, feed your men. Let them consume whatever meat is left ; for if we gain the day, they shall find plenty on before ; and if we lose it, few methinks, will want provisions."

Thus saying, the King turned and walked back towards the village ; and Sir John Grey choosing that moment, advanced and addressed him in a low tone in regard to Richard of Woodville. Henry soon stopped him, however. " We cannot speak on that to-night, my noble friend," he said. " It grieves me much I own, to debar a gallant gentleman from sharing in a field like this. I know that it will grieve him more than death ; but yet—Nay, no more. We will not speak of this. Set watch upon him ;—but not too strict. You understand me ; and you who taught my infant hands first to draw a bow, shall fight by my side to-morrow. Now, good night—I will tell you my

belief, it is, that this youth is guiltless. I do not often rashly judge men's characters ; and I formed my estimate of his, long, long ago. Farewell, and God shield us all to-morrow."

Sir John Grey hurried home and found, that, during his long absence, all in the house where he was quartered, except one or two of his own personal attendants and the necessary guard, had retired to rest. Ere he sought his pillow also, however, he sat down and wrote some hurried lines, which he signed and sealed ; and then, with a silent step seeking the chamber where Richard of Woodville slept, with two or three yeomen across the door, he went in, and gazed for a moment at the young knight, as he lay upon his little pallet with his arm under his head and a well pleased smile upon his slumbering face.

"That is not the sleep of guilt," said Sir John in a low murmur to himself. "There, that gives him my Mary, if I fall to-morrow ;" and thus saying, he laid the paper he had written upon Woodville's bosom, and retired to his own chamber.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BATTLE.

THE morning of the twenty fifth of October, St. Crispin's day, dawned bright, but not altogether clear. There was a slight hazy mist in the air, sufficient to soften the distant objects; but neither to prevent the eye from ranging to a great distance, nor the sun which was shining warm above, from pouring his beams through the air, and tinging the whole vapour with a golden hue. Early in the morning, both armies were on foot; but more bustle and eagerness was observable in the French camp, than amongst the English, who showed a calmer and less excited spirit, weighing well the hazards of the day, and though little doubting of victory, still feeling that no light and joyful task lay before them.

The French, however, were all bustle and activity. Men-at-arms were seen hurrying from place to place, gathering around their innumerable banners, ranging themselves under their various leaders, or kneeling and taking vows to do this or that, of which inexorable fate forbade in most cases the accomplishment. Nothing was heard on any side but accents of triumph and satisfaction, prognostications of a speedy and almost bloodless victory over an enemy, to whom they were superior, by at least six times the number of the whole English host, and bloody resolutions of avenging the invasion of France, and the capture of Harfleur, by putting to death all prisoners except the King and other princes, from whom large ransoms might be expected; for a vain people is almost always a sanguinary one. A proud nation can better afford to forgive. Nothing was heard, I have said, but such foolish boastings, and idle resolutions: but I ought to have excepted some less jocund observations, which were made here and there in a low tone, amongst the older, but not wiser of the French nobility, prompted by the super-

stitious spirit of the times, which was apt to draw auguries from very trifling indications.

“Heard you how the music of these islanders made the whole air ring throughout the night?” said one.

“And ours was quite silent,” said another.

“We have no instruments,” rejoined a third. “This King of theirs is fond of such toys, and plays himself like a minstrel I am told: but I remarked a thing which is more serious; their horses neighed all night, as if eager for a course, and ours uttered not a sound.”

“That looks bad, indeed,” observed one of the others.

“Perhaps their horses, as well as their men, are frightened,” answered another.

“I have seen no sign of fear,” replied one of the first speakers, with a shake of the head.

“Why the rumour goes,” said the first, “that Henry of England sent on Wednesday, to announce that he would give up Harfleur, and pay for all the damage he has done, if we would but grant him a free passage to his town of Calais.”

“It is false,” replied the first speaker. “I asked the Constable last night myself, and he said that there is not a word of truth in the whole tale and that Henry will fight like a boar at bay : so every Frenchman must do his devoir ; for if, with six times his numbers, we let the Englishmen win the day, it must be by our folly or our own fault.”

As he spoke, the Constable D’Albret, followed by a gallant train of knights and noblemen, rode past on a splendid charger, horse and man completely armed ; and, turning his head as he passed each group, he shouted, “To the standard, to the standard, gentlemen ! Under your banners, men of France ! You will want shade, for the sun shines, and we have a hot day before us.”

Thus saying, he rode on, and the French lines were speedily formed in three divisions like the English. The first, or vanguard, comprised eight thousand men-at-arms, all knights or squires, four thousand archers, and fifteen hundred cross-bow men, and was led by the Constable, the Dukes of Orleans and Bourbon,

with some twenty other high lords of France, while upon either wing appeared a large body of chosen cavalry. The whole line was glittering with gilded armour, and gay with a thousand banners of embroidered arms ; and, as the sun shone upon it, no courtly pageant was ever more bright and beautiful to see.

The main body consisted of a still larger force, under the Dukes of Bar and Alençon, with six counts, each a great vassal of the crown of France. The rear guard was more numerous still ; but in it were comprised the light armed and irregular troops, and a mixed multitude upon whom little dependence could be placed.

When all were arranged in order, on the side of the hill, the Constable addressed the troops in words of high and manly courage, tinged perhaps with a little bombast ; and when he had done, the whole of that vast force remained gazing towards the opposite slope, and expecting every moment to see the English army appear, and endeavour to force its way onward towards Calais. As yet, but a few scattered bodies of the invaders were apparent upon the ground, and

some time passed, ere the heads of the different corps were descried issuing forth in perfect order to the sound of martial music, and taking up their position on the field marked out by Henry during the night before. Their appearance, as compared with that of the French host was poor and insignificant in the extreme. Traces of travel and of strife were evident in their arms and in their banners; and their numbers seemed but as a handful opposed to the long line which covered the hill before them. Yet there was something in the firm array, the calm and measured step, the triumphant sound of their trumpets and their clarions, the regular lines of their archers and of their cavalry, the want of all haste, confusion or agitation apparent through the whole of that small host, which was not without its effect upon their enemies, who began to feel that there would be indeed a battle, fierce, bloody, and determined, before the day so fondly counted theirs, was really won.

Prompt and well-disciplined, with their bows on their shoulders, their quivers and their swords at their sides, and their heavy axes in their

hands, the English archers at once took up the position assigned to them, with as much precision, as if at some pageant or muster. Each instantly planted in the earth a heavy iron shod stake, which he carried in his left hand, and drove it in with blows from the back of his axe; and then each strung his bow and drew an arrow from the quiver. Behind, at a short distance, came the battle of the King, consisting of heavy armed infantry principally billmen, with a strong force of cavalry on either hand. The rearward under the Duke of Exeter, appeared shortly after, on the hill above; and each of the two last divisions occupied its appointed ground with the same regularity and tranquil order which had been displayed by the van.

The preparations which they perceived, the pitching of the stakes, the marshalling of the English forces, and the position which they had taken up, showed the French commanders that the King of England was determined, his battle should be a defensive one; and the appearance of some bodies of the enemy in the neighbourhood of the village of Agincourt, with the

burning of a mill and house upon the same side, led them to believe that some stratagem was meditated, which must be met by prompt action with the principal corps of Henry's army.

That there were difficulties in attacking a veteran force in such a position, the Constable D'Albret clearly saw, but he was naturally of a bold and rash disposition ; his enemies of the Burgundian party had more than once accused him of his irresolution and incapacity ; and he resolved that no obstacle should daunt, or induce him to avoid a battle with such an overpowering force at his command. He gave the order then to move forward at a slow pace, and probably did not perceive the full perils of his undertaking, till his troops had advanced too far, between the two woods, to retreat with either honour or safety. When he discovered this, it would seem an order was given to halt, and for some minutes the two armies paused, observing each other, the English determined not to quit their ground, the French hesitating to attack.

A solemn silence pervaded the whole field ;

but then Henry himself appeared, armed from head to foot in gilded armour, a royal crown encircling his helmet covered with precious stones, and his beaver up, displaying his countenance to his own troops. Mounted on a magnificent white horse, he rode along the line of archers in the van, within half a bow-shot of the enemy, exhorting the brave yeomen in loud tones, and with a cheerful face, to do their duty to their Country and their King. Every motive was held out, that could induce his soldiery to do gallant deeds; and he ended by exclaiming, "For my part, I swear that England shall never pay ransom for my person, nor France triumph over me in life; for this day shall either be famous for my death, or in it I will win honour and obtain renown."

Along the second and third line he likewise rode, followed close by Sir Thomas of Erpingham with his bald head bare, and the white hair upon his temples streaming in the wind; and to each division the King addressed nearly the same words. The only answer that was made by the soldiers was, "On, on! let us

forward !” and the only communication which took place between the King and his marshal of the host occurred when at length Henry resumed his position in the centre of the main battle.

“ They are near enough, my Liege,” said the old knight, “ Is your Grace ready ?”

“ Quite,” replied Henry. “ Have you left a guard over the baggage ?”

“ As many as could be spared, Sire,” replied the marshal. “ Shall we begin ?”

Henry bowed his head ; and the old knight setting spurs to his horse, galloped along the face of the three lines, waving his truncheon in his hand, and exclaiming, “ Ready, ready ! Now, men of England, now !”

Then in the very centre of the van, he stopped by the side of the Duke of York, dismounted from his horse, put on his casque, which a page held ready ; and then, hurling his leading staff high into the air, as he glanced over the archers with a look of fire untamed by age, he cried aloud “ Now strike !”

Each English yeoman suddenly bent down

upon his knee and kissed the ground. Then starting up, they gave one loud, universal cheer, at which, to use the terms of the French historian, "the Frenchmen were greatly astounded." Each archer took a step forward, drew his bow-string to his ear; and, as the van of the enemy began to move on, a cloud of arrows fell amongst them, not only from the front, but from the meadow on their flank, piercing through armour, driving the horses mad with pain, and spreading confusion and disarray amidst the immense multitude which, crowded into that narrow field, could only advance in lines thirty deep.

"Forward, forward!" shouted the French knights.

"On for your Country and your King!" cried the Constable D'Albret; but his archers and cross-bowmen would not move; and, plunging their horses through them, the French men-at-arms spurred on in terrible disarray, while still amongst them fell that terrible shower of arrows, seeming to seek out with unerring aim every weak point of their armour, piercing

their visors, entering between the gorget and the breast-plate, transfixing the hand to the lance. Of eight hundred chosen men-at-arms, if we may believe the accounts of the French themselves, not more than a hundred and forty could reach the stakes by which the archers stood. This new impediment produced still more confusion : many of the heavy-armed horses of the French goring themselves upon the iron pikes, and one of the leaders who cast himself gallantly forward before the rest, being instantly pulled from his horse, and slain by the axes of the English infantry ; whilst still against those that were following, were aimed the deadly shafts, till seized with terror, they drew the bridle and fled, tearing their way through the mingled mass behind them, and increasing the consternation and confusion which already reigned.

At the same moment, the arrows of the English archers being expended, the stakes were drawn up ; and encouraged by the evident discomfiture of the French van, the first line of the English host rushed upon the struggling

crowd before them sword in hand, rendering the disarray and panic irremediable, slaughtering immense numbers with their swords and axes, and changing terror into precipitate flight.

Up to this period, Henry surrounded by some of his principal knights, stood immovable upon the slope of the hill, but seeing his archers engaged hand to hand with the enemy, he pointed out with his truncheon a knight in black armour with lines of gold, about a hundred yards distant upon his left, saying, "Tell Sir Henry Dacre to move down with his company to support the van. The enemy may rally yet. A squire galloped off to bear the order; and instantly the band to which he addressed himself, swept down in firm array, while the King, with the whole of the main body, moved slowly on to insure the victory.

No further resistance, indeed, was made by the advanced guard of the French. Happy was the man who could save himself by flight; the archers and the cross-bowmen separating from each other, plunged into the wood; many

of the men-at-arms dismounting from their horses, and casting off their heavy armour, followed their example ; and others, flying in small parties, rallied upon the immense body led by the Dukes of Bar and Alençon, which was now advancing in the hope of retrieving the day. It was known that the Duke of Alençon had sworn to take the King of England alive or dead, and the contest now became more fierce and more regular. Pouring on in thunder upon the English line, the French men-at-arms seemed to bear all before them ; but though shaken by the charge, the English cavalry gallantly maintained their ground ; and, as calm as if sitting at the council-table, the English King from the midst of the battle, even where it was fiercest around him, issued his commands, rallied his men, and marked with an approving eye, and often with words of high commendation, the conduct of the foremost in the fight.

“ Wheel your men, Sir John Grey,” he cried, “ and take that party in the green upon the flank.—Bravely done upon my life ; Sir Harry

Dacre seems resolved to outdo us all. Give him support my Lord of Hungerford. See you not that he is surrounded by a score of lances ! By the holy rood he has cleared the way—Aid him, aid him, and they are routed there !”

“That is not Sir Harry Dacre, my Lord the King,” said a gentleman near. “He is in plain steel armour.—I spoke with him but a minute ago.”

“On, on,” cried Henry, little heeding him. “Restore the array on the right, Sir Hugh Basset. They have bent back a little.—On your guard, on your guard, knights and gentlemen ! Down with your lances. Here they come !” and at the same moment, a large body of French, at the full gallop, dashed towards the spot where the king stood. In an instant, the Duke of Gloucester, but a few yards from the monarch, was encountered by a knight of great height and strength, and cast headlong to the ground. Henry spurred up to his brother’s defence, and covering him with his shield, rained a thousand blows, with his

large heavy sword, upon the armour of his adversary, while two of the Duke's squires drew the young Prince from beneath his horse.

"Beware, beware, my Lord the King!" cried a voice upon his left; and turning round, Henry beheld the knight in the black armour, pointing with his mace to the right, where the Duke of Alençon, some fifty yards before a large party of the French chivalry, was galloping forward with his battle-axe in his hand direct towards the King. Henry turned to meet him; but that movement had nearly proved fatal to the English monarch; for as he wheeled his horse, he saw the black knight cover him with his shield, receive upon it a tremendous blow from the gigantic adversary who had overthrown the Duke of Gloucester, and, swinging high his mace, strike the other on the crest a stroke that brought his head to his horse's neck. A second dashed him to the ground; but Henry had time to remark no more, for Alençon was already upon him, and he had now to fight hand to hand for life. Few men, however, could stand before the English mo-

narch's arm ; and in an instant, the Duke was rolling in the dust. A dozen of the foot soldiers were upon him at once.

"Spare him, spare him !" cried the King ; but, ere his voice could be heard, a dagger was in the unhappy prince's throat.

When Henry looked round, the main body of the French were flying in confusion, the rear guard had already fled ; and all that remained upon the field of Agincourt of the magnificent host of France, were the prisoners, the dying or the dead, except where here and there, scattered over the ground, were seen small parties of twenty or thirty, separated from the rest, and fighting with the courage of despair.

"Let all men be taken to mercy," cried the King, "who are willing to surrender. Quick, send messengers, uncle of Exeter, to command them to give quarter."

"My Lord the King, my Lord the King," cried the voice of a man galloping up in haste, "The rear-guard of the enemy have rallied, and are already in your camp, pillaging and slaying wherever they come."

“Ha, then, we will fight them too,” cried the monarch. “Keep the field, my Lord Duke; and prevent those fugitives from collecting together;” and gathering a small force of cavalry, Henry himself rode back at speed towards the village of Maisoncelles. But when he reached the part of the camp where his baggage had been left, the King found that the report of the French rear-guard having rallied, was false. Tents had been overthrown, it is true, houses had been burnt, waggons had been pillaged; and the work of plunder was still going on. But the only force in presence consisted of some six or seven hundred armed peasantry, headed by about six score men-at-arms, with three or four gentleman apparently of knightly rank. The cavaliers, who had dismounted, instantly sprang on their horses and fled when the English horse appeared; and Henry, fearing to endanger his victory, shouted loudly not to pursue.

“I beseech you, my Liege, let me bring you back one of them,” cried the knight in the black armour, who was on the King’s left;

and ere Henry could reply, digging his spurs deep into his horse's sides, he was half a bow-shot away after the fugitives. They fled fast, but not so fast as he followed.

"We must give him aid, or he is lost," cried the King riding after; but ere he could come up, the knight had nearly reached the three hindmost horsemen, shouting loudly to them to turn and fight.

Two did so; but hand to hand he met them both, stunned the horse of one by a blow upon the head, and then turning upon the other, exclaimed, "We have met at length, craven and scoundrel! We have met at length!"

The other replied not, but by a thrust of his sword at the good knight's vizor. It was well aimed; and the point passed through the bars and entered his cheek. At the same moment, however, the black knight's heavy mace descended upon his foeman's head, the crest was crushed, the thick steel gave way, and down his enemy rolled—hung for a moment in the stirrup—and then fell headlong on the ground.

Light as air, the victor sprang from his saddle, and setting his foot upon his adversary's neck, gazed fiercely upon him as he lay. There were some few words enamelled above the vizor; and crying aloud, "Ave, Maria!" the black knight shook his mace high in the air, then dropped it by the thong without striking, and, unclasping his own helmet, as the King came up, exposed the head of Richard of Woodville.

Such was the last deed of the battle of Agincourt.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CONCLUSION.

IN the same large and magnificent hall of the royal castle at Calais, in which Edward III. entertained his prisoners after his chivalrous, though imprudent combat with the French forces under the walls of that town, was assembled the Court of England on the arrival of his great descendant, Henry V., some days subsequent to the battle of Agincourt. The scene was a splendid one; for, though the monarch and many of his nobility had to mourn the loss of near and dear relatives in that glorious field, no time had yet been given to prepare the external signs of grief; and the habiliments of all were, either the gay robes of peace and rejoicing, or the still more splendid panoply of war. As may be naturally supposed the

greater number of those present were men ; but, nevertheless, the circle round the King's person contained several of the other sex ; for, besides the wife and daughters of the Governor of Calais, and the ladies of several of the principal officers and citizens of the town, a number of the female relations of the conquerors of Agincourt, who had come over to the English city, on the first news of the army's march from Harfleur, were likewise in the hall.

No pageant or revel, however, was going forward ; and, although Henry could not but feel the vast importance of the deed that he had achieved, and the great results which might be expected to ensue, both in strengthening his power at home, and extending it abroad, yet his countenance was far more grave and thoughtful than it had been before the battle ; and, rejoicing, as was natural at such vast success, he rejoiced with moderation, and repressed every expression of triumph.

After speaking for some time with the persons round him, he turned to Sir John Grey who stood at a short distance on his left hand ;

and noticing with a kindly smile the knight's fair daughter, he said, "Now, my noble friend, you besought me this morning, to hear what you had to bring before me, concerning Sir Richard of Woodville. Ere I listen to a word however, let me at once say, that the good service rendered by that knight upon the field of Agincourt, wipes out whatever offence he may have before committed; and without prayer or solicitation, I free him from all bonds, and pardon everything that may be passed."

As he spoke, Richard of Woodville advanced from behind, and standing before the King, exclaimed, "I beseech you, Sire, to withdraw that pardon, and to judge me as if I had never drawn sword or couched lance in your service. If I am guilty, my guilt is but increased by having dared to break ward, and fight amidst honest Englishmen; and I claim no merit for what little I have done, except in having brought to your Majesty's feet, the traitor scoundrel, Simeon of Roydon, who doubtless, with his own lips, will now confess his treason towards you, his falsehood towards me."

“If he do not,” said Sir John Grey boldly, “I have, thank God, ample means to prove it. Let him be called, my Liege, and with him a certain knave, a prisoner likewise in my hands, named Edward Dyram.”

“Ha !” cried the King with a smile. “Has our old friend, Ned Dyram, too, a share in this affair? I had thought the warning I once gave, might have taught him to mend his manners.”

“They are past mending, my Liege,” answered Sir John Grey. “The villain will doubtless deny all, for he is a hardened knave as ever lived; but we can convict him notwithstanding.”

“Well, call them in,” answered Henry, “and have all things ready.” And while Sir John Grey and Sir William Philip, the King’s treasurer, quitted the circle for a moment, Henry turned to Mary Grey, and addressed her in a low tone, with a smiling countenance. The crowd drew back to let the King speak at ease; and the only words that made themselves heard were, “Methinks, fair lady, you have some interest in this affair?”

“ Deep, my Liege,” replied Mary Grey, with a glowing cheek.

What the King answered was not distinct to those around ; but the lady raised her bright eyes to his face, replying eagerly, “ More for his honour than for his life, Sire.”

No time was lost, for Sir John Grey expecting a speedy hearing, had prepared all ; and in less than five minutes he re-entered the hall, followed by a number of persons, some of whom accompanied him to the end of the chamber where the King was placed, and ranged themselves behind the circle, while the rest, consisting of prisoners and those who guarded them, remained near the door by which they entered.

Henry fixed his eyes upon the group there standing, and seemed to examine them attentively for a moment in silence, then raising his voice he exclaimed, “ Bring forward Simeon of Roydon, and Edward Dyram.”

The two whom he called immediately advanced with a man-at-arms on either side. The knight held down his head and gazed upon

the ground ; but the servant looked carelessly around, showing neither fear nor doubt.

“ Sir Simeon of Roydon,” said the King, in a stern tone, as soon as the culprit stood within a few yards of his person, “ You have been taken in arms against your country, and it were wise in you to make free confession of your acts. I exhort you so to do, not promising you ought, but for the relief of your own soul.”

The knight paused for an instant, looked to Dyram, and then to Richard of Woodville, and replied, “ I have nought to confess, Sire. Unjustly banished from my country, I had no right to regard myself as an Englishman : but it was not against you, my Liege, that I bore arms. It was against my enemy who stands there. Him I sought, knowing him to be in your camp.”

“ A poor excuse,” replied the King, “ and you must have had speedy intelligence, since he arrived there but the night before ; and you, fellow,” continued Henry, turning to Dyram, “ What know you of this knight, and his proceedings ?”

“ Very little, may it please your Grace,” re-

plied Ned Dyrham, "I have seen him before, I think; but where it was, I cannot justly say."

"May I ask one question of the guard, my Liege?" demanded Sir John Grey. Henry inclined his head; and the knight proceeded, "Have these two men held any communication together in the anteroom?"

"They spoke together for a few moments in a strange tongue," answered the man-at-arms, whom he addressed; "and when we parted them, they still talked from time to time across the room."

"Well," replied the old knight, "It will serve them but little. Have you the papers, Sir William Philip?"

"They are here," said the treasurer; and he placed a roll in the King's hand.

Henry looked at the first paper casually, saying, "This I know;" but regarded the second more attentively, and, after reading it through, turned to Sir John Grey, and enquired, "What is this? I see it refers to the man before us. But how was it obtained?"

"It is referred to, my Liege, in the question,

number four, which your Grace permitted me to draw up. You will find them further on. The two following letters I need not explain. The only question is, as to their authenticity, which can be proved."

The King read them all through with care ; and then taking a paper from the bottom of the roll, which appeared to contain a long list of interrogatories numbered separately, and written in a good clerkly hand, he perused it from the beginning to the end. After having read it, he turned to Sir Simeon of Roydon, saying, " You are here charged with grave offences, sir, besides the crime in which you were taken. It is stated here, that you purchased the arms of Sir Richard of Woodville, when they were sold in Ghent, on his men leaving the service of Burgundy to return to England ; and that you took his name while following our army up the Somme, and attacking our straggling parties with a leader of free companions, named Robinet de Bournonville. Is it so, or is it not so ? "

" This can be proved, my Liege," said Richard of Woodville, " for Sir Philip Beauchamp here

present, saw the arms in which this caitiff was taken ; and he can swear that they were a gift from himself to me."

" I acknowledge, Sire, that I did purchase them," replied Simeon of Roydon, " and, what my companions may have called me, I know not ; but if perchance they called me Woodville, it was in jest ; but no man can say that I was seen following your army from Harfleur hither."

" It is enough, it is enough," said the King. " Of this charge, Richard, you are free ;" he continued, turning to Woodville, and then resuming his interrogatories, he went on to ask, " Did you, or did you not, Sir Simeon of Roydon, intercept a letter from me to this good knight, and counterfeiting his signature, write a reply, refusing to obey my commands ?"

Sir Simeon of Roydon started, and turned a fierce look upon Ned Dyrham, as if he suspected that he had been betrayed ; but the surprise which he saw in the man's face, notwithstanding a strong effort to repress it, convinced him that Henry had other sources of information ; but resolute in his course to the last, he replied, in a bold tone, " It is false. Who is my accuser ?"

The King looked round ; and a sweet musical voice replied, “ I am ! ”

“ Stand forward, stand forward,” said the King. “ Ha ! who are you ?—I have seen that fair face before.”

“ Once, my Liege,” said Ella Brune, advancing, dressed in the garments she had worn immediately after her grandsire’s death, “ and then your Grace did as you always do, rendered justice both to the offender and the offended. I accuse this man of having done the deed that you have mentioned, and many another blacker still. I accuse him of having made use of him who stands beside him, Edward Dyram,—pretending to be a servant of Sir Richard of Woodville, long after he had been driven in disgrace from his train,—to obtain from the messenger of the Count of Charolois, the letter which your Grace had sent. Speak,” she continued, turning to Dyram, “ Is it not true ? ”

The man hesitated, and turned red and white, but was silent.

“ Speak,” reiterated Ella Brune, “ it is your last chance.—Then read this letter, my Liege,” she continued, “ from the noble Count of Charo-

lois, wherein he states, that he has traced out this foul and wicked plot and ——”

“ I will confess I *did*,” exclaimed Dyram, “ I did get the letter. I did aid to forge the answer ; but he, he Richard of Woodville, struck me, and I vowed revenge.”

“ What more ?” demanded the King sternly. “ If you hope for life speak truth. *You* have not defiled knightly rank ; *you* have not degraded noble birth ; *you* have not violated all that should keep men honest and true. There is some hope for you.”

“ Ha, knave !” exclaimed Simeon of Roydon, gazing at him fiercely ; but Dyram hesitated and paused without reply ; and Ella Brune proceeded, pointing with her fair hand to the papers which the King held open before him, and demanding, while her dark eyes fixed stern on Dyram’s face, “ And the letter from the prisoner of Montl’herry, to Sir John Grey, did you not erase the words with which it ended—they were if I remember right, ‘ touching my ransom,’—and change the Christian name in the superscription ?”

“ No, no,” cried the man vehemently, knowing

that the charge might well affect his life. No I did not—nobody saw me do it; I say I did not.”

“Fool !” cried Ella Brune, after giving him a moment to consider, “Your hate has been dangerous to others, your love has been dangerous to yourself—Give me that cup! My Lord the King, may I crave to see the letter I have named?”

Henry took it from the rest, and placed it in her hand; and, dipping her finger in a cup containing a clear white fluid, which the page of Sir John Grey brought forward, she ran it over the line immediately preceding Richard of Woodville’s signature. The King gazed earnestly on the parchment as she did so, and, to his surprise, he beheld the words she had mentioned reappear, somewhat faint and indistinct, it is true, but legible enough to show that the meaning of the whole paper had been falsified by their erasure.

“That wretched man,” said Ella Brune, pointing to Dyram, “in a foolish fit of tenderness towards my poor self, taught me the art of restoring writings long effaced; and

now, by his own skill, I show you his own knavery."

Henry turned round with a generous smile of sincere pleasure towards Richard of Woodville, saying, "I was sure I was not mistaken, Richard ;" and he held out his hand.

The young knight took it, and pressed his lips upon it, replying, "You seldom are, Sire ; but there is more to come, or I am mistaken."

"Nay, with him I have done," said Ella Brune looking at Dyram : "unless he thinks, by free confession of the whole, and telling how a greater knave than himself led him on from fault to fault, to merit forgiveness, the matter affecting him is closed."

"It is vain to conceal it," cried Dyram ; "not that I hope for grace ; for that is past ; but there will be some satisfaction in punishing him who was never grateful for any service rendered him."

"It was yourself you served, villain, and your own passions—not me !" cried Simeon of Roydon, with his eyes flashing fire.

"And how did you treat me ?" cried Dy-

ram. “It is true, my Liege, to gain this girl—devil incarnate as she seems to be!—I would have sacrificed ought on earth; and when, after laying a plot with this man to win her—which, by his knavery, had well nigh ended in her ruin—I confessed my fault to yonder knight, and he spurned me like a dog, I would have done as much to take vengeance upon him. I found a ready aid in good Sir Simeon of Roydon, who loved him as dearly as I did. In turns, we planned and executed. He devised the letter touching the ransom; he prompted the Duke of Orleans and the Count of Armagnac: I erased the writing, and changed the superscription. Then, again, I hinted that in the armour he had bought, and under the name of its first owner, he might follow your camp, and clench the suspicion of Sir Richard’s treason, by proofs that would seem indubitable, never doubting, indeed, that our enemy would be kept long in Montl’herry, but little caring whether the sword fell on the one knight or the other. To make all sure, however, I was sent to Montl’herry; but I arrived too late to prevent the prisoner’s escape;

and only discovered by whose assistance it was effected—by that fair maiden there, now clerk and now demoiselle. My story is told, and I have nought to plead. We are both guilty alike ; we both loved, and we both hated : but I would not have willingly injured her, who has now destroyed me. In that, and that only, am I better than this noble knight.”

“ Have you ought more to say, fair maiden, concerning Sir Simeon of Roydon ? ” asked Henry ; “ if not, I will at once deal with both of them as they merit.”

“ Nay, I beseech you, Sire,” exclaimed Richard of Woodville, “ before you act in any way, listen to me for one moment.”

“ Speak — speak, my good friend,” replied Henry ; “ I am always willing to hear anything in reason—what would you say ? ”

“ I know not whether your Grace would wish it spoken aloud,” said Woodville ; “ it refers to a time before your accession to the throne.”

“ Oh yes ! speak, speak ! ” cried Henry ; “ I have not forgotten Hal of Hadnock.—What of those days ? ”

“ Why, Sire, you may remember,” answered

Woodville, "that, as that noble gentleman you have just named and I rode by the stream near Dunbury, one night in the spring of the year, we found the body of my poor cousin Kate drowned in the water. The man before you thought fit to cast foul doubts on as true and gallant a gentleman as ever lived, Sir Henry Dacre. He now lies at the point of death from wounds received near Agincourt, and if ought on earth can save him, it will be to know that his good name is cleared from all suspicion. If this man could but be brought to speak, and to acknowledge that the charges he insinuated were false, it would be balm to a bruised heart."

"Nay," cried the King, "his falsehood is so evident, his knavery so great, that charges from his mouth are now but empty air. Yet I have heard how Sir Harry Dacre has suffered the bare doubt to prey like a canker upon his peace. Speak, Simeon of Roydon; and, if it be your last word, speak truth. Know you ought of Catherine Beauchamp's death? — and, if you do, whose was the hand that did that horrid deed?"

"Sir Harry Dacre's," answered Roydon, with

a malignant smile ; for he thought to triumph even in death. “ No one doubts it, I believe. —Does your Grace ? ”

“ Ay, that I do,” answered Henry ; “ and I have good cause to doubt it.—That man was sent by me to make enquiries,” and he pointed to Dyram, “ and everything that he discovered, I pray you mark, gentlemen all, tended to show that it was impossible Sir Henry Dacre could have done the deed. I have often fancied, indeed, that the knave had learned more than he divulged to me. Is it so, sir ? I remember your ways in times of old, that you would tell part, and keep back part. Did you learn ought else ? ”

“ Oh, no, Sire,” replied Dyram, with a laugh ; glancing his keen eyes towards Richard of Woodville ; “ I know nought ; but I suppose that Sir Henry Dacre did it.”

“ My Lord the King,” said Ella Brune, who had remained silent, with her dark eyes cast down, while this conversation took place, “ I can give your Grace the information that you seek to have.”

“ Ha !—you ! ” cried Roydon, gazing at her

with glaring eyes. "This is all pure hate. Mark, if she do not say I did it!"

"You did!" answered Ella, fixing her eyes upon him. "Do you remember the night after the glutton mass?—I was there! Do you remember hiding beneath the willows on the Abbey side of the stream?—I was there! Do you remember the lady coming and asking for the information you had promised to give, and your assailing her with words of love, and seeking to win her from her promised husband?—I was there!"

"False! false! all false!" cried Sir Simeon of Roydon; but his face as he spoke was deadly pale.

"If you saw all, fair maiden," said the King, "why did you not at once denounce the murderer?"

"I saw all but the last act, my Liege," replied Ella Brune. "Having wandered from Southampton with the poor old man, whom that knight afterwards slew, we found kindly entertainment for our music in a cottage at Abbotts Ann. Wearied with the noise and merriment, I went out and sat beneath the

trees ; I witnessed what I have said ; but then, not to be an eavesdropper, I stole away. When I heard of the murder, however, I well knew who had done it,—for the lady answered him scornfully,—and I should have told the tale at once ; but the old man forbade me, showing that we were poor wandering minstrels, and that my story against the noble and the great would not be credited ; yet I am certain that his hand did it.”

“ Out upon it ! ” cried Roydon ; “ will a King of England listen to such an idle tale ? will he not drive from his presence, with contempt, a mountebank singer who, without one witness, brings such a charge in pure hate ? ”

“ Not without one witness,” answered Ella Brune. “ I have one.”

“ Call him ! ” said Henry ; “ if this man can clear himself from the accusation, he shall have pardon for all the rest.”

Ella Brune raised her hand and beckoned to some one standing behind the circle, which had drawn somewhat closer round the spot where this scene was going on. Immediately,—while Sir John Grey made way,—a lady dressed in the

habit of a novice, with her face closely covered, advanced between the King and Simeon of Roydon.

“This is my witness,” said Ella Brune; and as she spoke, the other withdrew her veil.

Simeon of Roydon started back with a face pale as death, exclaiming, “Catherine!—She is living!—she is living!”

“Ay, but not by your will,” answered Catherine Beauchamp; “for you have long thought me dead.—Dead by the act of your own hand.—My Lord the King,” she continued, “all that this excellent girl has said is true. On a night you well remember, eager to learn from this man who you really were, I sought him by the banks of the stream, where he had promised to wait and tell me that and other matters, as he said, nearly affecting me. It was wrong of me to do so; but I had done much that was wrong ere then, and I had no scruples. He told me who you were; and then seeing that no great love existed between myself and poor Harry Dacre, he sought to win my wealth by inducing me to violate the contract with my promised husband and wed

him : what put such a vain notion in his mind, I know not ; but I laughed and taunted him with bitter scorn ; and he then told me that I should be his or die. At first I feared not ; but when I found him lift his hand and grasp me by the throat, I screamed aloud for help, and struggled hard. He mastered me, however, in an instant, and plunged me in the stream. As I fell, I vowed that, if Heaven would send me help, I would make a pilgrimage to St. James of Galicia. The waters, however, soon closed above my head, and in the one dreadful moment which I had for thought—as if the past had been cleared up and illumined by a flash of lightning—all the faults and follies of my former life stood out before me distinct and bright, stripped of the vain imaginations with which I had covered them. I rose again for a moment to the air ; and then I vowed that, if God spared me, I would pledge myself to the altar, and renouncing all that ensnared me, live out the rest of time, in penitence and prayer. I soon lost all recollection, however, and when first I woke as from sleep, in great feebleness and agony, I found myself in a litter, borne on towards the abbey.

Consciousness was speedily gone again; and when next I roused myself from that dull slumber, my good uncle Richard, the abbot, and an old monk of his convent, were the only persons near. As soon as I could speak, I told them of my vows, and engaged them to keep my recovery a profound secret, till I had taken the veil. The deeds that have been done, however, compel me to come forward now, and tell the truth. I have told it simply and without disguise; but yet I would fain plead for this man's life. To him as well as to others, I have had great faults, and towards none more than poor Sir Harry Dacre. In a month, however, my vows will be taken, and he will be free; but I would fain not cloud the peace with which I renounce the world, by bringing death on my bad cousin's head; and you, Sire, after such a mighty victory can well afford to pardon."

But Henry waved his hand, "Not a word for him!" he said; "loaded with so many crimes, I give him up to trial; and by the sentence of his judges will I abide. Remove the prisoners, and keep them under safe ward; one word more, fair lady," he continued as the men-

at-arms led Simeon of Roydon and Ned Dyrham from the presence, "how has it so fortunately chanced that you are here to-day?"

"I have travelled far, my Liege," replied Catherine Beauchamp in a gayer tone; "have made my pilgrimage, and passed part of my noviciate in a cell of the order I have chosen near Dijon. Coming back I met with some Canonesses, who were travelling under the escort of some troops of Burgundy, and with them journeyed to Peronne, whence, under the escort of Sir Richard of Woodville, and accompanied by this good maiden, I came hither. I will not waste your time, my Liege, by telling all the adventures that befel me by the way; but I have to ask pardon of my noble cousin Richard, here, for teasing him somewhat in Westminster and Nieuport, and doing him a still worse turn in Ghent by a letter to Sir John Grey. But good faith, to say the truth, I thought he was a lighter lover than he has proved himself, and now that I know all, I crave his forgiveness heartily."

"You have it, sweet Kate," answered Richard of Woodville; "but you have several

things to hear yet," he continued in his blunt way, "and some perhaps that may not be very palatable to you."

"Nay, I have heard all," answered Catherine Beauchamp; "but I stand no more in the way of that love, which I had long seen turning to another, when I spurned it from me myself. My vows at the altar will remove all obstacles; and I trust that Dacre will see me as a sister and a friend, though it be but to bid me adieu for ever."

"And I, Woodville," said the King, turning to the young knight; "I, too, would ask you pardon, if I had ever truly suspected you. Such, however, is not the case, and there are many here who can testify, that though I was willing that you should be made to prove your innocence, I never doubted that you could do so. For services rendered, however, and high deeds done, as well as in compensation for much that you have suffered, I give you one half of the forfeited estates of the traitor Sir Thomas Grey, to hold for ever of us and of our heirs, on presentation of a mace, such as that which beat down the adversary of my

brother Humphrey upon the day of Agincourt. —Sir John Grey, my good old friend, I think you, too, have a gift to give. Come, let me see it given ;” and leading forward Richard of Woodville, he brought him to the side of Mary Grey. The old knight placed her hand in his, and the King said “Benedicite.”

Ella Brune turned away her head. Her cheek glowed ; but there were no tears in her eyes ; and, ere many months were gone, she was a cloistered nun in the same convent with Catherine Beauchamp.

THE END.

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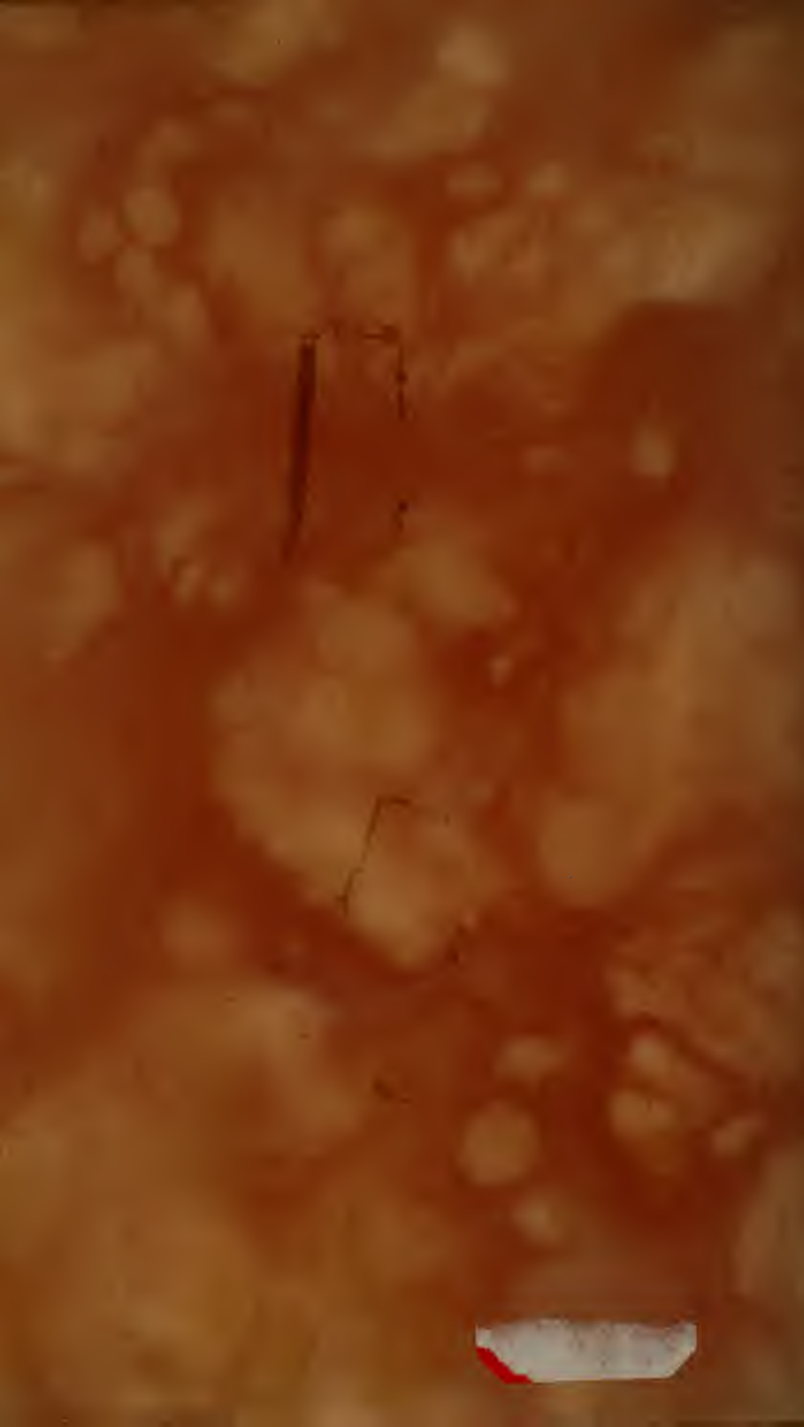
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